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ATLANTIC SERIES.

THE
YOUNG CIRCUS RIDER;
OR,
THE MYSTERY OF ROBERT RUDD.

BY
HORATIO ALGER, JR.

PHILADELPHIA
HENRY T. COATES & CO.

[1883]

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PREFACE.

As the Pacific Series, just completed, is devoted to stories of life and adventure on the Pacific coast, the Atlantic Series, of which the *Young Circus Rider* is the initial volume, will comprise stories located nearer home. The author will feel at liberty, however, should the exigencies of the plot require it, to change the scene temporarily to other parts of the continent.

The fascinations which the circus has always exercised over the minds of young people is so well known, that the author has felt justified in selecting the hero of the present story from that class of public performers who appeal so powerfully to the imagination of his young readers. In order to prepare himself for his task, he has

made personal acquaintance with more than one hero of the ring, and has sought to furnish an inside view of the life which he describes. He hopes that the result may prove acceptable to the juvenile public in whose behalf he is always glad to labor.

HORATIO ALGER, JR.

March 13, 1883.

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THE STAR OF THE CIRCUS.

CHAPTER I.

ANAK, THE NORWEGIAN GIANT.

ABOUT three o'clock in the afternoon an oddly assorted couple walked through the main street in the manufacturing town of Crampton. One was a man of herculean proportions, fully seven and a half feet high, but with a good-natured face that relieved the fears which he might otherwise have inspired. The other was a boy of fifteen, tall and slender, with a dark complexion and bright eyes. He found some difficulty in keeping pace with his tall companion.

"You're going too fast for me, Anak," he said at last. "Remember, my legs are not quite so long as yours."

The giant laughed—a deep, resonant and not

unmusical laugh, and answered: "I'm always forgetting that, Robert. I suppose I ought to walk alone, for I can't find any one to match me."

"See how people are looking at us," continued the boy, glancing quickly back. "There's an army of small boys following us."

"Do you want to see me scatter them?" asked Anak.

"Yes; it will be fun."

The burly giant turned, and assuming a terrific frown, ran back, his long limbs carrying him on at remarkable speed. Instantly the boys, with loud shouts of dismay, broke ranks and scattered in every direction, not daring even to look over their shoulders.

Anak came back, laughing heartily.

"I wonder what the boys thought I would do to them," he said. "The fact is, I like young people, and am always ready to take their parts; but then, they don't know that. Did I look very alarming just now?"

"Yes," answered Robert; "if I hadn't known you, I might have run too."

"I don't know about that, Robert. No one can accuse you of want of courage."

Robert smiled, and his dark face look very attractive when he smiled.

"I am not afraid of horses," he said.

"No; you are the most daring bareback rider I ever knew."

"I don't think I ever was afraid of horses," continued the boy, thoughtfully. "I can't remember the time when I was not used to them."

"How long have you been a bareback rider?" asked Anak.

"I think I commenced when I was nine years old."

"And now you are—how old?"

"Fifteen."

"You never told me how you came to join a circus, Robert."

"I was wandering about the country—tramping—without a friend, and without any means of living, when a circus man offered to train me as a rider. Anything was better than tramping, and I accepted—"

"And now you are

ROBERT RUDD,

THE BOY WONDER!

The Best Bareback Rider in the World."

"That's what the circus bills say," replied Robert, smiling. "Now let me introduce you. Gentlemen and ladies," said the boy, waving his hand, as if addressing an audience, "I have the pleasure of introducing to you,

ANAK!

THE CELEBRATED NORWEGIAN GIANT!

Eight feet in height, and weighing four hundred and twenty pounds, who has been exhibited before all the crowned heads of Europe, and is generally acknowledged to be the tallest giant in the world!"

"Good for you, Robert!" said the giant, good naturedly. "You've got it by heart, my boy."

"I want to ask you a favor, Anak," said Robert, slyly: "Speak a little Norwegian; I want to know how it sounds."

"Oh go away with you! I don't know any more Norwegian than you do."

"How is that? You don't mean to say you've forgotten your native language?"

"I never knew a bit of Norwegian, Rob, my boy; and as for native language, I'm minded to tell you a secret."

"Go ahead!"

"I was born in Tipperary, and they didn't use to speak Norwegian there when I was a boy."

"Then why do they call you a Norwegian?"

"It sounds better than Irish, you see."

"But haven't you ever been caught? Didn't you ever have a Norwegian come up and try to talk to you in his own language?"

"Yes," said Anak, laughing, "and mighty embarrassing it was, too."

"What did you do?"

"Faith, I opened upon him in old Irish. You ought to have seen the fellow stare. I shrugged my shoulders, and said I, 'You speak bad Norwegian,' and the crowd believed me. He slunk away, and that's the way I got over that."

"What's your real name, Anak?"

Anak looked about him guardedly, and finding that no one was within earshot, he answered, "Tom O'Connor, but don't give me away, Robert!"

"I don't believe I could, Anak," said the boy, laughing.

Anak joined in the laugh, and Robert continued, "When did you get your growth? I mean, how old were you?"

"I kept on growing till I was twenty-one. When I was sixteen I was six feet high, and

everybody thought I was through, but I kept on till I reached seven and a half feet, and then was tall enough to show."

"How about that eight feet, Anak?"

"You must ask the manager. They always make giants taller than they are. It's equal all round, and nobody's hurt. And now, Robert, I'm going to ask you a question."

"What is it, Anak?"

"Do you expect always to be in this business?"

"Bareback riding, you mean? No, I hope not," said the boy, gravely.

"I hope not, too. It'll do for a time, and there isn't anything else open to a big overgrown fellow like me, but you are a smart boy, and there are plenty of chances for you to get into something else. You never told me about when you were a little boy; can you remember as far back?"

"Not much," answered the boy, soberly. "Sometimes I seem to remember a fine house and grounds, and it seems as if I were riding on a beautiful lawn, on a pony, with a servant at my side. But it is provoking that I can't remember any more, and the whole seems dim, and melts

away, and it may be all imagination, after all."

"It may be all true, Robert. Was it in America, do you think, now?"

"That is more than I can tell. It may be all fancy."

"Have you any relations living?"

"Not that I know of," said the boy sadly; "I wish I had. I feel very lonely sometimes, and there doesn't seem much to live for."

"You've plenty of friends, Rob—all of us like you."

"Yes, you all treat me well."

"You have always been a favorite in the circus, my lad."

"Yes; I never had anything to complain of except that my trainer was sometimes a little rough. But it isn't as if I had somebody belonging to me—a brother, or a cousin, at the least. Have you any relations, Anak?"

"Yes, I've got any number of cousins, and my old mother's living, too, bless her heart."

"In Norway?" asked Robert, slyly.

"Oh go away! they know no more about Norway than you do. It is in Tipperary they all

live. I've forty or fifty cousins at the least, and I'll give you a half a dozen with pleasure, if it'll do you any good."

"I don't think they would answer my purpose, Anak," answered the boy, smiling.

"Well, as I was sayin', Robert, I wouldn't stay with the circus always if I was you."

"What else is there for me to do?"

"Wait and see. You're young yet."

"My education is very poor, you know, Anak."

"Can't you read and write?"

"Yes, but not much more. I should like to go to school for two years."

"Sure you look like a gentleman, and you'll be one some day, I shouldn't wonder."

"Look there, Anak!" said the boy, suddenly; "there's a man who appears to be in trouble."

As he spoke he pointed to the driver of a team, which seemed to have settled in the mud, for it was now spring-time, and the roads were in a bad condition. The driver was shouting frantically to the horse, who was making desperate efforts to pull the wagon out of the mire, but without success.

CHAPTER II.

ANAK'S EXPLOITS.

“**W**HAT’S the matter, my friend?” inquired Anak, addressing the driver of the team.

The latter stared in amazement at the gigantic querist, but his trouble overcame his surprise, and he answered, “You can see for yourself. My wagon’s mired and my horse is too lazy to draw it out.”

“Indeed the poor beast is unable,” said Anak.

“He can do it if he wants to,” said the driver, angrily. “I’ll see if I can’t persuade him,” and he flourished a whip in a menacing manner.

“Hold there!” said Anak. “We’ll see if we can’t help him.”

So saying he went round to the back of the wagon, and, seizing it in his powerful hands, cried, “Now start your horse!”

The driver did so, and, with Anak’s powerful

help, the horse had small difficulty in extricating the wagon from the mire.

"There, that's better than beating your horse," said Anak, stepping once more to the side of the road.

"You're powerful strong, sir," said the teamster, respectfully, surveying the colossal proportions of Anak.

"I ought to be, oughtn't I?" returned Anak.

"Excuse me, sir, but do you belong to the circus?"

"Yes, you'll find me there if you take the trouble to visit it."

"Are you the Norwegian giant?"

"That's what they call me," answered Anak, smiling.

"Well, at any rate, I'm obliged to you for helping me."

"And so is the horse, I'm thinking."

"Yes; you are as strong as a horse yourself," said the teamster, admiringly.

"That is convenient sometimes, my friend."

The teamster drove on, and Anak and Robert also continued their walk.

"The manager doesn't like to have me show

myself for nothing," said Anak, "but I can't stay under canvas all day to oblige him. My health requires me to walk out in the open air."

"Does it require you to walk so fast, Anak?"

"Excuse me, Robert; I'm always forgetting."

"The manager has less trouble in keeping Madame Leonora in," said Robert.

"That's true; she's too fat to walk much. She weighs more than I do, though she's two feet shorter."

They had drawn out of the village, and got into the comparatively open country among the farms. They were talking of one subject and another, when suddenly their attention was drawn to a small boy who was running towards them in terror and dismay.

"What's the matter?" asked Robert, his sympathy quickly aroused; "are you hurt?"

"No," answered the boy, slackening his speed, "but Mr. Tarbox is going to whip Jimmy."

"And who is Jimmy?"

"Jimmy's my brother."

"And what have you been doing?"

"We were only cutting across his lot, when he came out and chased us, swearin' awful. I got

away, but he's got poor Jimmy, and he's going to horsewhip him," and the poor boy burst into terrified tears.

Robert afterwards learned that this Tarbox was a rough, tyrannical old farmer, noted for his bad temper, who appeared to cherish a special antipathy to boys. There was a footpath around his field, which considerably lessened the distance to the main road for some of his neighbors, but in the ugliness of his disposition he forbade it to be used. Men he did not venture to attack, but woe betide the boy who ventured to enter his enclosure.

"Where is this Tarbox and your brother?" asked Anak.

The boy pointed to a house and lot a little farther on.

"We wouldn't have gone across-lots," he explained, "but mother was taken sick, and we got frightened and wanted to call the doctor as soon as we could, and we thought we might do it for once."

"Did you tell this man Tarbox the reason you went across his field?" asked Anak.

"Yes, but he said it was no excuse, and I am afraid he'll kill poor Jimmy."

The little boy fell to weeping again.

"There they are!" said Robert.

In a field, just off the road, was a strong, brutal-looking man deliberately engaged in tying a boy of twelve to a tree. The whip in his hand showed what he intended to do afterwards. He might indeed have dispensed with tying the boy, for he was quite unable to escape, but he did it on the same principle that a cat plays with a mouse, to increase the terror of the poor victim.

His back was turned, so that he did not see the approach of Anak and the two boys.

This was what the new-comer heard as they approached:

"Oh, please don't whip me, Mr. Tarbox," pleaded the poor boy, in an agony of apprehension.

"Then why did you come across my lot, you little rascal?"

"I was in a hurry to call the doctor, because mother was sick. Indeed that was the only reason."

"I've got nothing to do with your sick mother," said Tarbox. "That was no reason for coming across my field."

"I didn't hurt anything, sir; I just walked along the path."

"I'll larn you not to try it again, Jim Benton; I'm goin' to give you as good a floggin' as ever you had. You can just tell the other boys how it feels and mebbe they'll want to try it."

"Oh, please don't whip me! I ought to be goin' for a doctor. My mother may die."

"She can die for all I care," said the brutal Tarbox. "Now I've got you tied, and I'm goin' to give your jacket a good warmin'."

He raised the whip and was about to bring it down upon the shrinking limbs of the poor boy, when he was startled by a deep, stern voice only a rod behind him, "Don't touch that boy!"

Tarbox looked back and saw Anak striding towards him. He had not seen him before, but he knew who he was, for he had seen the posters of the circus. Though rather startled, he was not disposed to yield his victim easily.

"Get out of my field!" he snarled; "you're trespassin'."

"I can't help it," said Anak; "I'm not going to see a brute like you whip a poor child while I am here to defend him."

"You ain't, hey?" snarled Tarbox. "I've got the law on my side, and I'm goin' to do it. Just you clear out, you two, or I'll have the law on you."

He raised the whip, but did not get a chance to use it. Anak reached him in one stride, snatched the whip from his hand and flung it into the road; then, grasping the stalwart farmer by the collar, shook him till his teeth chattered, with as much ease as Tarbox himself would have handled the twelve-year-old boy.

"Perhaps you'll change your opinion now?" he said.

Tarbox was astonished and cowed. There wasn't a man in town that could cope with him, yet he was but a child in the hands of the Norwegian giant.

"I'll have the law of you!" he shrieked in furious anger.

"So you may, but first you've got to untie that boy."

"I won't!"

"You won't, hey?"

Again Anak seized him, and shook him vigorously in spite of his struggles.

When he let him go, Tarbox, with an evil look, called, "Here, Bruiser! come here, sir."

A large, wicked-looking bull-dog bounded over a stone wall, and rushed forward evidently bent on mischief.

"Sik him!" he exclaimed, pointing to Anak.

"Is your dog's life insured?" asked Anak, calmly.

He waited till the dog was within a foot or two, aiming to attack his leg; then he raised one of his powerful feet, aimed a tremendous kick at Bruiser, and the dog was stretched senseless at his feet.

"It's your own fault," said Anak, turning to the farmer; "your dog is probably dead. Now, untie that boy."

Tarbox by this time seemed thoroughly frightened. With dark, sullen looks he obeyed the giant, and Jimmy, overjoyed to recover his freedom, stretched his arms and legs.

"Now, go for the doctor as fast as you please," said Anak.

The two brothers quickly started on their errand, and Anak, turning to Tarbox, said, "You miserable brute, if I ever hear of your attempting to abuse a poor boy again, I'll travel five

hundred miles if necessary to kick you as I have kicked your dog. Go back to your house or I may do it now."

Tarbox needed no second order. He was rather afraid that he too might feel the weight of the giant's boot, and he hurried away. Safe in his own yard, he shouted, "I'll have you punished for this, you big rascal!"

Anak only laughed.

"We may as well be going back, Robert," he said; "I don't want to get into any more fights."

CHAPTER III.

THE WRATH OF MR. TARBOX.

COLMAN'S Grand Combined Circus and Menagerie, with its line of showy chariots, its collection of animals from all parts of the habitable world, and its general array of wonders, had pitched its tent in a large otherwise unoccupied lot in the eastern part of the town.

An immense tent, capable of containing six thousand spectators, had been erected, and presented a picturesque appearance. All was hurry and bustle in and around the circus tent. Crowds of staring urchins were gathered as near as possible, on the chance of seeing something of the wonders hidden by the canvas. I am afraid more boys played truant on that day than had done so for many previous weeks, for to the mind of the average school-boy there is nothing more seductive than a travelling show.

Anak and Robert had been missed, for it was

not often they absented themselves so long, and it is possible that the heart of the manager might have been stirred by apprehensions lest two of his greatest attractions should have taken French leave and forsaken him on the eve of battle.

When they were seen approaching, a boy smaller than Robert ran to meet them.

This was Charlie Davis, also a bareback rider, but a year younger than Robert, who performed an act with him.

"Where have you been, you two?" he asked. "I thought you'd run away?"

"If Anak ran away, it would take a fast runner to catch him," said Robert. "No, we've been taking a walk.

"Why didn't you tell me? I should like to have gone, too."

"You're not much of a walker, you know, Charlie. Still you might have helped us. We got into a fight."

"Where? Who did you fight with?" asked Charlie, his curiosity aroused.

"With a brutal old farmer, who had tied a boy to a tree, and was going to flog him. You ought to have seen how Anak tamed him down. He

just took him by the collar, and shook him as a cat would a rat."

"What did he do?"

"He called his dog, a big, ugly brute, named Bruiser. Bruiser's funeral will take place to-morrow."

"I wish I had been with you," said Charlie, in a tone of disappointment.

"If you had, I should have let you do the fighting," said Anak. "Well, Charlie, how are things getting on?"

"Oh, everything is about ready. They've laid out the ring, and are putting up the seats. The bearded lady's sick, and says she shan't appear if she doesn't feel better. But they can spare her better than they could us."

"I don't know," said Robert, smiling. "At any rate, we have harder work to do than she, though we may not get as much money."

"And it isn't as good fun, either," remarked Charlie.

"That's true. Well, let us go in and see how things are going on."

Charlie Davis was a year younger and considerably smaller than Robert, but his line of business

was the same, and the two rode together well. Young performers are always popular, and the two boys always received their share of applause. Charlie had a more lively temperament than Robert, and being a little fellow was a general favorite among the other performers.

Leaving the circus for a time we will go back to Mr. Nathan Tarbox, who had been so signally defeated in his plans of revenge upon his young victim by Anak. As he entered the house he was met by Mrs. Tarbox, who from the window had witnessed with dismay the conflict between her husband and the Norwegian giant.

She was a tall, bony woman, not usually demonstrative, but she rushed up to her husband on this occasion in a tremor of excitement and threw her arms round his neck.

"Oh, Nathan!" she exclaimed, "I thought that monster would kill you. I shook like a leaf when I saw you in his grasp."

"Quit your fooling," returned the affectionate husband. "Why didn't you come out and help me?"

"How could I—a delicate woman like me?" asked Mrs. Tarbox, reproachfully.

"I suppose you wouldn't have minded seeing me killed before your eyes," retorted Nathan with sarcasm; "you wasn't too delicate for that. I dare say you'd like to be a widow."

"How can you talk so, Nathan? You hurt my feelings. Do be reasonable, now. What could I do?"

"What could you do? I'll tell you what you could do. You could have taken the frying-pan and laid it over his head. That's what you ought to have done. Between us we could have managed the big brute."

"You know, Nathan, I couldn't have reached his head. Who is he? I never saw such a monster before in all my born days."

"He's the Norwegian giant at the circus. If he hadn't been a giant I could have managed him. There isn't a man in town but I can handle."

"Of course there isn't. What made him touch you?"

"It's all the fault of them bad Graham children that tramped across my fields when I'd told 'em not to. I was goin' to give the biggest one a lesson with a horsewhip, when that overgrown

ruffian broke in and seized me. I wish I had him tied to a tree just for five minutes," said Tarbox, walking the room in his fury. "Big as he is I'd lash him till he bellowed for mercy."

"That would be nice, Nathan dear," said Mrs. Tarbox, complacently.

"Nice, Mrs. Tarbox!" exclaimed her husband, turning the vials of his anger upon her; "we might have done it, too, if you had had the courage to come out and stand by your husband. You could have seized him from behind, while I gave him a lashing. Instead of that you were standing at the window smirking in your foolish way, I've no doubt. A pretty wife you are!"

"O Nathan, I am sure you don't know what you are saying. You forget I am a weak, delicate woman."

Though Mrs. Tarbox was tall, strong, gaunt and bony, she was accustomed to consider herself delicate. It was fortunate that she was not so, and that she was not particularly sensitive, or the brutal temper of her husband would have worn upon her more than it did. She was fortunate in being a silly woman. It saved her much mental suffering.

"You weak and delicate!" retorted her husband, contemptuously. "So is a ostrich."

"Where's Bruiser? Why didn't you call him?"

Mrs. Tarbox had not witnessed the untimely fate of that amiable quadruped.

At the mention of Bruiser her husband's wrath again overflowed.

"He's dead!" he shouted. "That brute killed him."

"How did he do it?" asked his wife, not without curiosity, for she knew the bull-dog's strength.

"Kicked him to death! That's how he did it."

"He must be very strong," murmured Mrs. Tarbox. "Don't you think we ought to erect a gravestone over Bruiser," she continued, "just as I did over that sweet canary? A piece of board would do, you know."

"Perhaps you'd like to write some lines for it," remarked Mr. Tarbox, sarcastically.

"I was thinking, Nathan, we could put something like this:

*	HERE LIES BRUISER!	*
:		:
:	Cut off in the flower of his youth—	:
:	Gone to meet old Towser!	:
*		*

and Mrs. Tarbox looked up to her husband for his approval.

"Mrs. Tarbox," he said, "I believe you are the greatest fool in town. Have you got any common sense?"

"Nathan, you shouldn't talk so to your wife," she answered, placidly. "I only spoke for the best; of course, if you think of anything you like better, I don't care."

"I have no time to think of epitaphs on dogs, Mrs. Tarbox. I've got something more important to do. Do you know what I am going to do, Mrs. Tarbox?"

"Change your shirt, perhaps," said his wife; "you forgot to do it this morning."

Mr. Tarbox came near swearing.

"No," said he, "I'm going to have that brute arrested for assault and battery, for trespassing on my grounds and killing my dog. That's what I'm going to do."

"So I would, Nathan. I wonder you didn't think of it before."

"Then get supper ready, and I'll go round and get a warrant for his arrest as quick as I get through."

CHAPTER IV.

MR. TARBOX INVOKES THE MAJESTY OF THE LAW.

EZEKIEL PRICE, justice of the peace, generally known as Squire Price, was just rising from his supper table when the one maid of all work, Bridget, entered and said: "Mr. Price, old Tarbox is at the door and wishes to see you."

"Old Tarbox!" repeated the squire in a tone of reproof. "Really, you should speak more respectfully of Mr. Nathan Tarbox."

"Everybody calls him old Tarbox," said Bridget, "and he's the meanest man in town."

"Let that pass," said the justice, using a pet phrase. "Tell him to come in."

Mr. Tarbox immediately afterwards was ushered into the room.

"Good evening, Mr. Tarbox," said the squire, in a dignified tone.

"Good evenin', squire."

"All well at home, I trust, Mr. Tarbox."

"Oh yes," answered Tarbox, impatient to come to business. "I've come on law business."

"Indeed!"

"I want justice!" continued the farmer, slapping the table energetically, to the imminent hazard of a cup and saucer standing beside.

"If I can be of any service to you in my—ahem! judicial capacity, I of course should consider it my duty to help you."

"I want a warrant for the arrest of a brute."

"Ahem! my powers do not extend to the arrest of brutes. They are limited to human beings."

"You know what I mean—a brute on two legs, and mighty long ones, too."

"I cannot say I apprehend your meaning, Mr. Tarbox. Whom do you wish to arrest, let me ask?"

"The Norwegian giant."

"The Norwegian giant!" repeated the squire in astonishment.

"Yes; the giant they've got at the show."

"What has he been doing?"

"What hasn't he been doing?" shouted Tarbox. "He came into my lot this afternoon, seized me

by the collar, nearly shook me to pieces, and kicked my dog Bruiser to death."

Squire Price listened in undisguised amazement.

"Really," he said, "this was a high-handed outrage. Was he drunk?"

"No; he can't get off on no such plea as that. He was as sober as you or I."

"Did he assign any reason for his extraordinary attack?"

"He was meddling in affairs that he had nothing to do with."

"What affairs?"

This was rather an embarrassing question to answer.

"The fact is, I caught Jimmy Graham and his brother cutting across my lot—a clear case of trespass—and I was about to give Jimmy a lesson when that brute interfered—"

"What sort of a lesson were you going to give him?" asked the squire, shrewdly.

"Why, you see I had tied the boy to a tree, and was going to touch him gently with a horse-whip, when in jumped this overgrown bully and attacked me."

"Ahem! I begin to see. I hear that the Graham boys' mother was taken sick this afternoon, and the boys were probably going for the doctor."

"So they said, but they had no right to go across my lot."

"It strikes me, Mr. Tarbox, they were excusable under the circumstances."

"No, they were not; I have forbidden 'em time and again from goin' across my field."

"There's a path, isn't there?"

"Yes, but it's my path."

"Did the boy attract the giant's attention by screaming?"

"Yes."

"Well, Mr. Tarbox, to be frank with you, I think it was very natural for him to interfere in defence of a boy about to receive brutal treatment."

"I hope you ain't goin' to take the side of law-breakin', squire?"

"You say he seized you by the collar and shook you up, Mr. Tarbox?"

"Yes; he made the teeth chatter in my head till I thought they would drop out."

"And he frightened you, did he?"

"Yes; I thought he was goin' to take my life," said Mr. Tarbox, desiring to make the assault seem as aggravated as possible.

A mild smile played over the placid face of the squire, who was evidently not impressed as he should have been by the recital of Mr. Tarbox's wrongs.

"And then you called Bruiser, did you, Mr. Tarbox?"

"Yes."

"What did you expect Bruiser to do?"

"I wanted him to tear the giant to pieces. He was just makin' for his legs when the brute drew back his foot and kicked him to death."

In his excitement Mr. Tarbox rose and paced the room.

Squire Price smiled again. It is to be feared he did not deplore, as he should have done, the sad and untimely fate of the amiable bull-dog.

"Now, what do you want me to do, Mr. Tarbox?"

"I want a warrant for the arrest of this big scoundrel."

"For killing Bruiser? That appears to have been in self-defence."

"No; for assault and battery on me, Nathan Tarbox, a free-born American citizen. It's come to a pretty pass if I am to be attacked and nearly killed by a foreign Norwegian, who has come over to America to take the bread from our own citizens."

"Well, I suppose I must give you what you desire, Mr. Tarbox, if you insist upon it," said the squire.

"Of course I insist upon it. I'm not goin' to be trampled under foot by a minion of a foreign power."

"Do you happen to know the giant's name?" asked the squire.

Mr. Tarbox scratched his head.

"I can't say I rightly remember his name. I think it's Enoch."

"Enoch! Very likely. That's a good Bible name. Just wait here a moment, Mr. Tarbox, and I will make out an order of arrest."

The squire left the room and returned in five minutes with a paper duly drawn up, directing any constable or police officer to apprehend the giant known as Enoch, and produce before him to answer to a charge of assault and battery on Nathan

Tarbox, a citizen of Crampton. There was more legal phraseology, but this was the purport of it.

"Thank you, squire," said Mr. Tarbox, in evident gratification, as he deposited the valuable document which was to secure his revenge in the right inside pocket of his coat.

"Who are you going to get to serve the warrant?" asked the squire.

"Sam Spriggins; he's the nearest constable."

"Very well," said the squire, with a peculiar smile.

"I'm going to have him arrested just as the evening performance is to commence," said Mr. Tarbox, triumphantly; "that'll trouble him, and probably they'll cut off his pay, but it'll serve him right."

After Mr. Tarbox left the squire had a quiet laugh, but as he did not mention to any one what had aroused his mirth we are left to conjecture what it was all about.

Nathan Tarbox proceeded at once to the house of Constable Spriggins, and was lucky enough to find him at home. In fact, Mr. Spriggins was out in his back yard, splitting some kindlings for use the next morning.

Sam Spriggins, who filled the high office of constable, was not a man of imposing appearance. He was about five feet eight inches in height, and had hair of a flaming red, and probably weighed about one hundred and forty pounds. It was somehow suspected that Mr. Spriggins was not a man of reckless bravery. He had never been employed to arrest desperate criminals, and law-breakers were not accustomed to quail before his glance. In fact, Sam was more likely to be the one to quail. Why he had been appointed constable was not very clear, but probably it came about because no one else wanted the office.

"Good evening, Mr. Tarbox," said the constable, desisting from his employment.

"Good evenin'. I've got some work for you to do."

"What is it?"

"I want you to make an arrest."

"Who's the party?" asked Sam, in a tone which betrayed some apprehension.

"It's the Norwegian giant at the circus."

"Come now, Mr. Tarbox, you're joking," said Spriggins.

"Joking!" shouted Tarbox. "Do I look like

joking? Why, this Enoch came into my lot this afternoon and nearly killed me. It's an outrageous case of assault and battery, and here's the warrant for his arrest duly made out by Squire Price."

"Is he very large?" faltered the poor constable.

"Very large! He's eight or nine feet high," said Tarbox.

"Couldn't you call on some other constable?" pleaded Spriggins, nervously. "You see, it's very inconvenient for me to leave my work."

"No; you're the man, and it's your legal duty to serve the warrant. Besides, the other constable's out of town."

"When do you want the man arrested?" faltered Spriggins.

"I want you to go right over to the show with me now."

"Do—do you think he'll be violent?" asked the constable.

"I can't say," answered Tarbox. "Anyhow, the law is on your side, and I'll go with you, and stand by you."

Sam Spriggins never in his life so deeply regretted that he had accepted the office of constable.

CHAPTER V.

TARBOX AND THE CONSTABLE GO TO THE CIRCUS.

"I THINK I'll go in and bid my wife good-by," said the constable, ruefully.

"What's the need of that?" asked Tarbox, impatiently.

"We don't know what may happen," said Spriggins, solemnly. "I'm ready to do my duty by the gover'ment; but it's a risky business, arrestin' a giant."

"Oh, well, be quick about it. I don't believe Mrs. Spriggins will mind."

This remark did not seem to encourage or soothe the constable, but he made no remark. He went into the house, and Mrs. Spriggins followed him when he came out.

"Nathan Tarbox," she said, "you're real mean to get my husband into trouble."

"How have I got him into trouble," demanded Tarbox doggedly.

"You want to get him into a fight with a giant. He ain't fit to wrestle with any one, bein' in poor health, least of all a giant."

"Ain't he a officer of the law? That's what I want to know," said Tarbox.

"Why, yes."

"Then let him do his duty. I've put a warrant into his hands, and Squire Price and I expect him to execute it."

"Suppose he's killed?" suggested Mrs. Spriggins.

Her husband looked nervous at the possibility hinted at, but Tarbox was inexorable.

"Then you can be proud of his dyin' while doin' his duty. Come, constable, I've no time to waste. Come along!"

"You're real mean!" ejaculated Mrs. Spriggins, tearfully.

Tarbox deigned no answer, but strode out of the yard, followed by the reluctant constable.

Few words were said, but when they were half way to the circus grounds a bright idea struck Spriggins.

"I say, Mr. Tarbox," he said, eagerly, "can't we compromise this thing?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"You might authorize me to say to the giant in a friendly kind of way that your feelin's are hurt, that it's probably all a misunderstandin', and propose to make up."

"Spriggins, are you a fool? Do you think I'm goin' to compromise after I've been shaken almost to pieces and my dog has been kicked to death?"

"He might agree to buy you a new dog, if it was properly set before him."

"A new dog wouldn't make up for Bruiser. He scared all the children in the neighborhood. I shan't see his like again. What I want is—revenge!"

"Why don't you lay for him then yourself, and not drag me into it?"

"Spriggins, I believe you're a coward—you're afraid of this Enoch."

"Who wouldn't be afraid of a man eight or nine feet high?"

"I ain't afraid of him," said Tarbox, stoutly. "I'll stand by you; we'll face him together."

Seeing that there was no disposition to yield on the part of his client, if I may so designate Mr

Tarbox, the constable continued on his way, grasping the warrant in uneasy fingers.

It was some distance to the circus grounds, but the way seemed all too short for Constable Spriggins, who felt like a man approaching an enemy's battery.

At length they came in sight of the circus grounds. Around the big tent were congregated a crowd of men and boys, and a stream of people was already marching up to the box office to buy tickets, while hitched to trees and posts were carriages and wagons of all descriptions which had been employed to convey intending spectators from the town round about. Nothing draws like a circus in the country, or perhaps we may add in the city also.

"There's goin' to be a crowd," remarked the constable.

"Yes; fools and their money are soon parted. I never went to a circus in all my life. It's all foolery."

"I went once when I was a boy, and I liked it. I little thought under what circumstances I should make my second visit," said Spriggins, ruefully.

"Circuses are wicked, in my opinion," said Tarbox. "I'd close 'em all up if I could; we'll do what we can to stop this."

By this time they had got into the crowd at the entrance.

Instead of going up to the ticket office to purchase tickets they passed on, and reached the doorway where stood a man to receive tickets.

"Where's your tickets?" demanded he of Spriggins and his companion.

Mr. Spriggins turned to Tarbox expecting him to explain.

"We don't need no tickets," said he in an impressive manner. "This man is an officer of the law."

"No deadheads—no free list," said the ticket-taker shortly. "Stand aside!"

"You don't understand me," said Tarbox. "This is Constable Spriggins, and he demands admission in the name of the United States and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts."

"The United States don't own this show, nor yet the State of Massachusetts. Stand aside and let those who have tickets enter."

"It's no use," said the constable, rather relieved. "They won't let us in."

"This officer wants to make an arrest in your building," said Tarbox, trying again.

"Can't help it! He can't get in without a ticket."

"You see how 'tis," said Spriggins, cheerfully. "We can't get in."

"Force your way in!" said Tarbox, indignantly. "You've got the law on your side."

This the constable positively refused to do.

"Then buy a ticket and go in. The State will pay you back."

"I've no call to do it, and I don't believe I'd get my money back."

"You refuse to do your duty, do you?"

"No I don't. I've tried, and I can't. You know how it is yourself."

Mr. Tarbox was nonplussed. He didn't like to give up his cherished scheme of vengeance, yet how was he to carry it out?

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said; "I'll buy you a ticket, and trust to the State to pay me."

"You can't collect it of me," said the consta-

ble, "even if the State don't pay you." You can buy me a ticket if you want to."

But Tarbox was seized with a sudden suspicion. Spriggins might go in and see the show at his expense, and leave his duty unperformed. There was nothing to do but to go in with him, and that would involve the purchase of two tickets, and the expenditure of an entire dollar, which Tarbox, who was a close man, could not think of without mentally groaning. Nevertheless, his soul thirsted for revenge, and it was clear that revenge could not be had without expense.

"Spriggins," he said, "I'll buy two tickets, and we'll go in together."

The constable would have preferred to go in alone. He wanted to see the show, and if he had been unaccompanied he could have done so without any troublesome duties disturbing his enjoyment.

"Jest as you say," he answered, a little nervously.

Mr. Tarbox joined the line, and gradually worked his way to the ticket office.

"A couple of tickets," he said, handing a dollar bill to the ticket agent.

Two tickets were immediately passed to him, and he and the constable entered the tent.

Opposed as he was to the circus, Tarbox could not forbear looking about him with considerable curiosity. They were not yet in the main room, but were in an outer lobby where were ranged the cages of animals. Mr. Tarbox started as an African lion, whose cage he was passing, roared, and he regarded with some apprehension the gratings of the cage.

"It's rather resky," he said. "Suppose the lions or tigers should break out."

The constable trembled at the suggestion, but still seemed interested in looking about him.

"Come, Mr. Tarbox," he said, "let's go and look at the elephants."

"Do you think I came here to see elephants?" he said, sternly. "Constable, I call upon you to do your duty."

"How can I?" asked the constable; "I don't see the giant."

One of the canvas men happened to be passing, and Mr. Tarbox, rightly concluding that he was connected with the show, asked, "Where's Enoch?"

“Enoch!” repeated the canvas man, staring;
“I guess you’re off. I don’t know any Enoch.”

“I mean the Norwegian giant.”

“Oh!” said the attendant, smiling. “You just follow round to the left, and you’ll see him. He’s sittin’ next to the fat lady.”

“Constable,” said Mr. Tarbox, grasping his companion by the arm, “we are on the scent. Come along, and we’ll see what the villain has to say to the law.”

CHAPTER VI.

TARBOX IS DEFEATED.

THE performance had not commenced—indeed, half an hour would elapse before the hour fixed—and several of the performers were to be seen among the spectators about the cages of the animals. One of these Tarbox recognized.

“Look at that boy!” he said, clutching the constable’s arm.

He pointed to Robert Rudd and Charlie Davis, the two young riders, who were walking together.

“What of him?” asked Spriggins.

“That’s the young villain that was with Enoch.”

Spriggins inwardly wished that the warrant was for Robert instead of the giant.

“Why didn’t you arrest him instead of the giant?” he asked.

“Perhaps I will yet, for he trespassed on my grounds: but it was Enoch that shook me up and

killed Bruiser. Look here, young feller," he said, addressing Robert.

Robert turned and smiled as he recognized the farmer.

"Oh, it's you," he answered.

"Yes, it's me," answered Tarbox, sternly.

"Where's Enoch?"

"Who do you mean?"

"That overgrown brute that was with you this afternoon."

Charlie Davis asked a question in a low voice of Robert, and then turning to Tarbox before Robert had a chance to answer him, asked: "Do you want to buy a dog, mister?"

"You're too small! I don't want a puppy!" answered Tarbox, scowling.

"Oh, you're too fresh!" answered Charlie, rather annoyed, particularly as Robert laughed.

"Why don't you answer me, boy?" demanded Tarbox, angrily.

"I will conduct you to my friend, the Norwegian giant," answered Robert, politely.

"Come along, Spriggins!" said Mr. Tarbox, pulling after him the reluctant constable.

Spriggins would have enjoyed a leisurely ex-

amination of the Albino sisters, the wild man from Borneo, the living skeleton, and the fat lady, but none of them had attractions for Mr. Tarbox, whose soul was fired by the desire for revenge. All too soon they reached the chair where in massive dignity sat Anak, the Norwegian giant.

As Anak's eyes rested on the approaching visitors, he looked amused.

"I'm glad to see you, my friend," he called out, in the deep tones natural to him, to Tarbox.

"And I'm glad to see you," said Tarbox, spitefully. "I came here expressly to see you."

"You're very kind," said Anak. "Take a good look. There ain't so much of me as there is of my friend, Mme. Leonora," with a wave of the hand towards the fat lady; "but you can look at me as much as you want to."

"I shall soon see you in a prison cell," said Mr. Tarbox, sternly. "Constable Spriggins, do your duty, sir."

Poor Spriggins gazed at the immense man before him, with his heart gradually sinking down into his boots. Never in all his life had he been placed in such an embarrassing position. What utter nonsense it was for him to think of leading

out such a monster by the collar. Why, he couldn't begin to reach up to Anak's collar.

"Can't we compromise this thing?" he asked, faintly.

"No, we can't, Spriggins; I insist upon your doin' your duty."

"What do you want?" asked Anak, in some curiosity.

"Produce your warrant, Spriggins," said Tarbox.

The constable mechanically drew it out from his inside pocket.

Tarbox saw that he must take the initiative, and he was perfectly willing to do so.

"Enoch," he said, "this man is an officer of the law. He has a warrant for your arrest."

"For my arrest?" inquired Anak, opening his eyes in amazed surprise.

"Yes, for assault and battery on me, Nathan Tarbox, and the murder of my dog, Bruiser. Such things can be done in Norway, p'r'aps, but they ain't allowed in the State of Massachusetts. Spriggins, do your duty."

The constable looked at the giant uncomfortably, and edged away a little.

"What!" said Anak, shaking his sides, "does he want to arrest me?"

"Yes," said Tarbox, grimly. "Spriggins, read the warrant."

"Read it yourself, Mr. Tarbox."

Tarbox did so with evident enjoyment, but Anak's enjoyment seemed no less.

"Ho, ho, ho!" he shouted. "This is a joke!"

"You won't find it much of a joke," said Tarbox. "Come, Spriggins, do your duty."

"Mr. Enoch," said the constable, in a trembling voice, "if you'll come with me without making any fuss, I'll see that you are well treated."

"Suppose I don't?" said Anak.

Spriggins looked helplessly at Tarbox. That was a question he could not answer.

"Then it'll be the worse for you," said Tarbox, who was always ready to make up for his companion's deficiencies.

"Can't you wait till the performance is over?" asked the giant, smiling.

"To be sure," said Spriggins, quickly. "Anything to oblige."

"No," said Tarbox, decidedly. "The warrant must be served now. You have no discretion."

"I'd like to oblige the gentleman," said the constable, who wanted to avoid trouble and see the performance.

"You can't. It won't be allowed."

"What's the use of losing the benefit of our money, Mr. Tarbox?"

"That's my affair. I don't want to see the circus. I consider it a wicked snare to lure souls to Satan."

"But I don't; you can go, you know," suggested Spriggins.

"No; I shall stay here to see that you do your duty."

"You have no charge over me," said the constable, with some spirit.

"All the same you need looking after. Enoch, if you defy the law you'll find it the worse for you. This ain't Norway."

"No; we've got no such fools as you in Norway," retorted the giant. "Tell me what you want."

Tarbox whispered to Spriggins.

The latter in a tremulous voice said, "Enoch, I arrest you in the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and I require you to come with me at once."

"Come and take me," said Anak, his broad face relaxing with a smile.

"What do you mean?" asked Tarbox, quickly.

"I mean that I shan't stir from this chair. My contract with this show requires me to sit here. If the constable wants me, he must take me by force. He needn't be afraid. If he can take me he may."

Even Tarbox looked rather nonplussed. Both he and Spriggins together would have found it impossible to carry off a giant weighing over four hundred pounds.

"You see, we'll have to give it up," said Spriggins, with evident pleasure.

"You're glad of it!" said Tarbox, suspiciously. "You don't want to do your duty."

"I've tried to do it, and it's no use," said the constable, with a little show of spirit. "If I had the strength of a yoke of oxen, I might do something; as it is, I can't."

"You'd better come quietly, Enoch," said Tarbox, his own courage beginning to fail.

A crowd had collected about the two, and derisive smiles and remarks greeted the lamentable failure of Tarbox's scheme of revenge.

"Get a wheelbarrow, mister," said a boy from a neighboring town.

"Hadn't you better try a derrick?" suggested a man beside him.

"You must be a lunatic!" said another.

"We'd better go, Mr. Tarbox," said Spriggins, uncomfortably.

"I won't stir," said Tarbox, looking around him with a scowl, "till I see that warrant served. I wish I was a constable."

"It wouldn't be healthy for you, old man!" said Charlie Davis, who, with Robert, had been drawn to the scene, and heard the colloquy.

"I'd make you healthy if I had you with me for a few minutes," said Tarbox, scowling.

"Thank you; you're very kind, but my time is too valuable," said Charlie.

"What is all this?" asked a voice of authority.

It was the voice of the manager, who had been attracted by the crowd as he was going his rounds.

"The matter is that we've got a warrant for this man's arrest!" said Tarbox, pointing to the giant.

"Show me your warrant!"

It was handed him.

He smiled as he read it, and handing it back, remarked, "Your warrant is mere waste paper, gentlemen."

"Why is it?" asked Tarbox, defiantly.

"Because there is no such man as Enoch in this show."

"Isn't that his name?" asked Tarbox.

"No, it isn't. If you can find a man by that name you are welcome to take him."

"Crushed again," remarked Charlie Davis, mockingly.

Tarbox made a grab for the boy's collar, but failed to secure him.

"Come along out, Spriggins," he said, in a tone of deep depression.

"You can go if you like," said the constable, independently; "I'm going to stay and see the show."

CHAPTER VII.

THE EVENING ENTERTAINMENT.

NATHAN TARBOX was not a liberal man.

Indeed he had the reputation of being very close-fisted and mean. Never had he been known to invite a friend to a place of amusement, never had he been willing to incur the expense of a dime for another. Yet here he had paid fifty cents for a ticket of admission to the circus, and presented it to the constable. We know, however, why he did this. He saw no other way of compassing his revenge upon the giant who had so grievously offended him, and revenge even outweighed money in his eyes.

Well, it had turned out a failure. In spite of the cowardice of Spriggins something might have been accomplished, and at all events the Norwegian might have been put in the attitude of a man defying the law, which would have made the eventual penalty greater. But there had been a

ridiculous error in the warrant—an error for which he was compelled to admit that he himself was responsible. Thus he was balked of his vengeance, for the time being at least, and he was a dollar out of pocket. That Spriggins should deliberately disobey him and stay to see the show was aggravating. He would rather have thrown the money away.

“Goin’ to stay and see the show!” repeated Tarbox, angrily. “You can’t do it, Spriggins.”

“Why can’t I?”

“I didn’t buy you the ticket for no such purpose.”

“Can’t help that, Mr. Tarbox. I should be a fool to leave the show, now I’m in, and my ticket paid for.”

“Then, Mr. Spriggins, I shall expect you to repay me the fifty cents I spent for your ticket.”

“You must excuse me, Mr. Tarbox; you paid me in. I didn’t ask you to, but now I’m in I’m goin’ to stay. I wouldn’t have come to pay my own ticket, for I’m a poor man, and I can’t afford it.”

“Do you think I can afford to throw away a dollar on two tickets?” demanded the farmer, angrily.

"I should say you could if you wanted to. You're pretty well off, and if I was as rich as you I wouldn't mind goin' to anything that comes round."

"You don't know anything about my circumstances. Besides I guess they'll give me my money back, if I tell 'em how I was deceived into buyin' tickets."

"Ask them, if you want to. If they'll do it, I'll go out."

The two made their way to the portal, and Tarbox said to the ticket-taker: "I only came in on business; I didn't come to see the show. I want to know if I can get my money back."

"Of course not," said that official.

"But I came in on business connected with the law."

"Can't help it! You've seen part of the show already; I saw you lookin' at the curiosities."

"I wanted to arrest one of the curiosities," said Tarbox, indignantly. "I wouldn't give two cents to see 'em all."

"Then if you're an enemy of the show, you can't expect any passes. Just stand aside and let people pass."

Tarbox was utterly disgusted. He was baffled at every turn. If he only had been concerned he would not have minded so much, but that Spriggins should pass an evening of enjoyment at his expense rankled in his breast.

"We'll go out anyhow," said he to the constable.

"You can do as you please, Mr. Tarbox. I'm goin' in to get a seat and see the show."

"Your conduct is disgraceful, constable. You ain't fit for your position."

"I shall do as I please," said Spriggins, independently. "If you choose to let the show keep your money, and you get nothing for it, you may. I ain't such a fool. They'd be glad if all would do the same. All they want is the money."

This argument made an impression upon the farmer. As he couldn't get his money back, it did seem worth while to get some value for it. Besides, if the truth must be told, he had some curiosity to see the performance. Never in all his life had he been to a circus, and he always spoke of them as sinful; still he wanted to know what they were like.

"I don't know but you're right, constable," he

said. "I don't hold to encouragin' such demoralizin' sights, but on the other hand I don't want to do 'em a favor by makin' 'em a present of a dollar for a free gift. I feel obliged to stay, situated as I am."

"That's the way to look at it," said the constable, gratified at the change in his companion's sentiments. "Come and let's get seats, so we can see what's goin' on."

He led the way and Tarbox followed him. They succeeded in obtaining favorable seats, notwithstanding it was within five minutes of the time for beginning the varied list of performances.

It must be admitted that Mr. Tarbox was interested, in spite of himself, in the successive features of the entertainment. I do not propose to describe them in detail. I advance to one in which one of our characters takes part.

"Gentlemen and ladies," said the manager, "I will now introduce to your notice Robert Rudd, the champion bareback rider of his age in the world."

A horse was led into the ring, and Robert, dressed in tights and a showy costume, bounded into the ring also.

The horse was started. He ran along by the side of it; then, laying his hand upon the animal, vaulted upon his back. After riding round the ring once or twice he rose to his feet and maintained his position with perfect ease while the horse, stimulated by the crack of the whip, galloped round the course.

"I declare, that beats all!" said Spriggins, who had never attended a circus before.

"That's the boy that was with the giant," said Tarbox.

"Well, he's a smart rider. I never saw the beat of him."

Mr. Spriggins was destined to be still more astonished. Hoops were brought and placed at regular intervals, covered with paper, and the boy rider jumped through each in succession, landing again on the horse's back.

"Did you ever see anything like it before, Mr. Tarbox?" asked the constable.

"No, and I never want to again," said Tarbox, with a growl, though he regarded the boy's performance with as eager curiosity as his companion.

"I think it's beautiful," said Spriggins; "I'm glad we come."

"I dare say you do, as long as I pay the bills," said Tarbox, in a sarcastic voice.

"Don't you like it yourself?"

"I don't care anything for it. I only stayed because I didn't want the show people to get the advantage of us."

Robert finished his act, and at his exit was greeted with a storm of applause.

He was followed by the younger boy, Charlie Davis, who went through a similar performance, and was received with similar favor. Young performers generally win the favor of an audience, and their efforts to please are received with considerable indulgence, though on the present occasion this was not needed.

On two reserved seats sat an old gentleman whose seamed face and bleached hair indicated advanced years. By his side sat a man of thirty-five, with a dark face and keen, watchful black eyes, whose expression was not likely to prepossess a stranger in his favor. The lines about his mouth indicated a hard, selfish man, whose thoughts were centred in himself.

This much by way of introduction. I need only add that the first impressions likely to be formed

of this man were the correct ones. To the old man who sat at his side, and whom he regarded watchfully, he bore the relation of nephew.

It was perhaps surprising to see at the circus a man as old as Cornelius Richmond, for this was the name of the uncle, but he had been persuaded by his nephew, Hugo, with whom he was travelling, to attend, and, as the only alternative was an evening at a dull hotel, he yielded. But during the first part of the performance he looked on in a listless manner, not seeming interested. Hugo, who was younger, appeared more attentive. But when Robert Rudd bounded into the ring, the old man started, and leaning forward, said quickly, in a tone not free from agitation, "Do you see that boy, Hugo?"

Hugo, too, seemed struck by the boy's appearance, but he answered with studied indifference, "Yes, uncle, I see him. What of him?"

"Is he not the image of my dead son? Never have I seen such a resemblance to what Julian was at his age!"

"My dear uncle," said Hugo, shrugging his shoulders, "I assure you that it is all a fancy on your part. To me he looks very unlike my cousin."

“You don’t remember him as I do, Hugo. If Julian’s son were living, he would look like that boy.”

“Possibly, uncle,” said Hugo, carelessly; “but as he is dead that cannot interest us!”

While Robert was in the ring the old man followed him with a glance almost painful in its eagerness.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SCHEMING NEPHEW.

WHEN Robert left the ring, the old man sank back into his seat, and his interest in the performance ceased. For some reason his nephew also was anxious to leave the tent.

"Uncle," he said, "hadn't we better go back to the hotel? It will be too fatiguing for you to remain here all the evening."

"Will that boy ride again?" asked Mr. Richmond, eagerly.

"No, he is not to appear again."

"Then I think I will go. As you say, I may feel fatigued."

There was a hack in waiting to convey them back to the hotel, for the distance was too great for a feeble old man to walk.

When they reached the hotel, Mr. Richmond went at once to his chamber, attended by his nephew.

"You had better go to bed at once, uncle," said Hugo, and he prepared to leave the room.

"Stay a moment, Hugo. I want to speak to you," said the old man.

"Very well, uncle," and Hugo seated himself.

"The sight of that boy has affected me strangely, Hugo," said Mr. Richmond. "He seems just what Julian was at his age."

"You said so before, uncle," said Hugo, in a tone of annoyance; "but I assure you there is nothing in it. My eyes are better than yours, and I could see no likeness."

"Suppose Julian's child were living," proceeded Mr. Richmond, not heeding his nephew's last speech, "he would be about the age of that boy."

"There are tens of thousands of boys about the same age, uncle," said Hugo, flippantly.

"Yes, but they haven't his look," returned the old man, shrewdly.

"Really, uncle, you are troubling yourself to no purpose. The son of Julian died when he was four years old, as Fitzgerald reported to us."

"He might be mistaken. If he only were!" exclaimed the old man, with deep emotion. "How

bright my few remaining years would be if I had Julian's son with me!"

"No doubt. But he is dead, and we may as well give up all thoughts of such a possibility. Besides, uncle, you have me, and I try to do all I can for you. If I have failed, I deeply regret it," continued Hugo, assuming a tone of sorrow.

"No, no; I have no fault to find with you, Hugo," said his uncle, hastily. "You are devoted to me, as I am well aware; but you cannot be to me what a son or a grandson might be."

"No, I suppose not," said Hugo, with a sneer which his uncle did not detect. "But I am afraid, uncle, you will have to be content with my humble services, however unacceptable they may be."

"Nay, Hugo, I do not mean to mortify you. I am truly grateful for your devotion, and you will find it to be so when I am gone."

"You are a long time going!" thought Hugo, as his cold glance rested on the trembling form of his uncle. "It is exasperating that you should linger so, cutting me off perhaps for half a dozen years longer from the enjoyment of the estate which is one day to be mine."

It was well that the old man could not read the thoughts of the man in whom he placed so much confidence. He little knew the cold, crafty, scheming character of the man who supplied to him the place of son and grandson.

"If you have no more to say, uncle, I will leave you," said Hugo, rising.

"I came near forgetting. I want you to find out all about that boy and let me know. The manager boards at this hotel."

"Still harping on the boy!" muttered Hugo.

"Very well, uncle, I will do as you say."

"Thank you, Hugo. I shall feel more easy in mind when I have learned."

As Hugo left the room, he said to himself, "I will do as my uncle requests, but for my own benefit, not his. Though I would not confess it to him, the resemblance to my cousin is startling. I don't wonder Uncle Cornelius noticed it. Can it be possible that Fitzgerald deceived me, and that the boy is really alive, and is a bareback circus-rider? He is capable of playing me false. If he has done so, I must at all hazards prevent my uncle finding it out. The estate of Chestnut-wood, for which I have schemed so long, must be

mine. The life of a frail old man alone separates me from it now, but if this boy were found, then I should sink back to my life of humble dependence. It shall never be!"

It was not yet 10 o'clock, and Hugo was in no mood for bed. He went down-stairs and remained in the bar-room till the return of the hotel guests who were connected with the circus.

Towards 10.30, Mr. Coleman, proprietor of the circus, entered the office of the hotel. He was in good spirits, for there had been a large attendance at the first performance, and the prospects of a successful season were flattering.

"Good evening, Mr. Coleman," said Hugo, approaching the manager, to whom he had been introduced; "did your first performance pass off well?"

"It was immense, sir, immense! I am proud of Crampton! It has received me royally," returned the manager, enthusiastically.

"I am glad to hear it. May I offer you a cigar?"

"Thank you, sir."

"You will find mine choicer than any you can procure here. I spent a part of the evening at the tent."

"I hope you didn't get tired."

"Oh, no; that was not the cause of my coming away. The fact is, my uncle, who was with me, became fatigued (he is a very old man), and I felt obliged to come home with him. I should have been glad to stay till the close."

"It's a pity you did. Coleman's circus, though I do say it myself, has no superior on the road this season."

"I can easily believe it, sir. By the way, I was rather interested in the bareback riding."

"It takes everywhere. I have two of the smartest boy riders in the country."

"Where did you pick them up?" asked Hugo, with assumed carelessness.

"The younger one, Charlie Davis, comes from Canada."

"My attention was particularly attracted to the other."

"Robert Rudd?"

"Yes, if that is his name. How long has he been with you?"

"Two seasons. Before that he was with another smaller circus."

"How long has he been riding?"

"Ever since he was eight or nine years old. That boy is perfectly fearless with horses. Not many grown men can ride as well. And that isn't all! I could easily make a lion tamer of him if he were willing. He has a wonderful power over the wild beasts. I believe he would go into their cages and they wouldn't offer to harm him."

"My cousin Julian had a passion for horses," thought Hugo. "If this boy were his son he would come honestly by his taste."

"You don't know how he came to adopt such a life, do you?" he asked.

"No; I believe the boy was alone in the world. I have heard him say he was under the care of a man who called himself his uncle, but for whom he does not seem to entertain any affection. Whether this man deserted him, or he ran away from the man, I don't know. At any rate he fell in with some men in our business, and a well-known rider, seeing that the boy was quick and daring, offered to instruct him in his special line. The boy accepted, and that is the way he drifted into the show business."

"You say he has no relatives?"

"None that he knows of."

“Has he any education?”

“He can read and write, and I believe he knows something of arithmetic. He is smart enough, if he ever got an opportunity, to learn. I am selfish, however, and should not like to lose him, though I might consent if he could better himself. You see, sir, although I am in the show business myself, I don’t consider it a very desirable career for a boy to follow. I’ve got a boy of my own, but I have placed him at boarding-school, and he shall never, with my permission, join a circus. You’ll think it strange, Mr. Richmond, but so far as I know, Henry has never yet witnessed a circus performance.”

“I quite agree with you, Mr. Coleman,” said Hugo. “Then I offer you another cigar.”

“Thanks, but I never smoke but one just before going to bed. If you are here to-morrow evening I shall be glad to offer you a ticket to the show.”

“Thank you, but I must get away to-morrow with my uncle.”

As Hugo went up-stairs to his room he said to himself, “It is high time we left the place, for the manager’s story leads me to think this boy may be my cousin’s son after all. My uncle must

never know or suspect it, or my hopes of an inheritance are blasted."

The next morning when Hugo entered his uncle's apartment, according to custom, the old man asked eagerly, "Did you learn anything about the boy, Hugo?"

"Yes, uncle, I learned all about him. He was born in Montreal, and his father and mother live there now. He sends them half his earnings regularly. His name—that is, his real name—is Oliver Brown."

Mr. Richmond never thought of doubting the truth of this smoothly-told fiction, but he was greatly disappointed. He sighed deeply, and when Hugo proposed to continue their journey that day he made no objection.

CHAPTER IX.

TWO BOYS ON A TRAMP.

“MR. TARBOX, where on earth have you been?” inquired his wife, when her liege lord returned about 11.30 o’clock.

“I’ve been to the circus,” said the farmer shortly.

“Oh, why didn’t you take me, Nathan? I’ve always wanted to go to the circus,” said Mrs. Tarbox in a tone of disappointment.

“It isn’t a fit place for you,” said her husband.

“You went!” said his wife, significantly. “If it’s a fit place for you, why isn’t it for me?”

“Do you think I went there for pleasure? You ought to know me better than to suppose I would visit such a demoralizing spectacle for amusement.”

“Then why did you go?”

“I went to arrest that brute who kicked Bruiser to death and assaulted me. That’s why I went.”

"Did he feel bad when you arrested him?" asked Mrs. Tarbox, with natural curiosity.

"No; I had to defer it, for the warrant wasn't rightly made out."

"Dear me! Did it take all the evening?" asked his wife.

"Peace, woman! You ask too many questions," said Tarbox, who found it rather difficult to explain matters.

"It must have been so nice to see the circus," murmured Mrs. Tarbox; "but I am sure I should have been afraid of the giant."

"There was a fat woman," growled Tarbox, "who looked as silly as you do. I dare say she wasn't, though."

"How funny you are, Nathan!" said his wife, who wasn't at all sensitive. "How was she dressed?"

"How on earth should I know? She didn't wear a coat and pantaloons."

"It must take a sight of calico to make her a dress. How much does she weigh?"

"Two tons, more or less," answered Tarbox.

"Good gracious!" ejaculated his simple-minded wife. "I never heard the like. Do let me go to

the circus, husband. I should so like to see her."

"You might never come back alive. There's lions, and tigers and wild cats all around. They often break out of their cages and kill a dozen people before they can be stopped."

Mrs. Tarbox turned pale and gave up her idea of going to the circus.

"You'd make a nice meal for a tiger. They're fond of bones," continued the farmer, grimly.

"O, Nathan, don't say another word. I wouldn't go now if I could get in for nothing."

The next day, after a consultation with Squire Price and the constable, Mr. Tarbox concluded that it wouldn't be worth while to obtain a new warrant for the arrest of the giant, as he had reason to believe that Mr. Spriggins would go out of town to avoid serving it. It was hard to give up his cherished scheme of vengeance, particularly as he had already expended a dollar in vain; but there seemed no alternative.

"One thing I can do," he said to himself; "if I can get hold of that boy that was with Enoch I'll give him a thrashing. He trespassed on my grounds, and I saw him laugh when the brute kicked Bruiser. I can manage him, anyway."

There was no afternoon performance at the circus except on Wednesday and Saturday, and Robert and his friend Charlie Davis were at leisure.

"Let's go on a tramp, Charlie," said Robert, after they had eaten dinner.

"I'm with you," said Charlie. "Where shall we go?"

"Oh, well, we'll go across the fields. Perhaps we'll go into the woods. Anything for fun."

The two boys set out about two o'clock, and after reaching the borders of the village took a path across the fields.

"I wish nuts were ripe, Rob," said Charlie. "We'd have a nice time knocking them off the trees. Do you remember last fall up in Maine?"

"Yes, but it's June now, and we can't have any fun of that kind. However, we can have a good time. Do you see those bars?"

"Yes."

"I'm going to vault over them."

"All right. I'll follow."

Robert ran swiftly, and cleared the bars without touching them. Charlie followed, but, being a shorter boy, felt obliged to let his hand rest on the upper bar. They were accustomed to spring-

ing from the ring upon the backs of horses, and practice had made that easy to them which was difficult for ordinary boys.

"I say, Charlie," said Robert, thoughtfully, as they subsided into a walk, "what are you going to do when you are a man?"

"Ride, I suppose."

"In the circus?"

"Of course."

"I don't think I shall."

"Why not?"

"I don't want to be a circus rider all my life."

"I should think you would. Ain't you the Boy Wonder?"

"I shan't be the Boy Wonder when I'm twenty-five years old."

"You can't make so much money any other way."

"Perhaps not; but money isn't everything I think of. I would like to get a better education and settle down to some regular business."

"There's more fun in circus riding," said Charlie, who was not as thoughtful a boy as his companion.

"I don't see much fun in it," said Robert. "It

is exciting, I know, but it's dangerous. Any day, if your nerves are not steady, you are likely to fall and break a limb, and then good-bye to your riding."

"There's no use in thinking about that."

"I think there is. What could we do if we had to give up riding?"

"Oh, something would turn up," said Charlie, who was of an easy disposition. "We might take tickets or keep the candy stand."

"That wouldn't be very good employment for a man. No, Charlie, I think this will be my last season at circus riding."

"What will you do?"

"I am saving money so that, at the end of the season, I can have something to keep me while I am looking round."

"You don't say so, Rob! How much have you saved up?"

"I've got about two hundred dollars saved up already."

Charlie whistled.

"I had no idea you were so rich," he said.

"Why, I haven't got five dollars."

"You might have. You are paid enough."

"Oh, it goes some way. I guess I'll begin to save, too."

"I wish you would. Then if you want to leave the circus at the end of the season we'll go somewhere together, and look for a different kind of work. We can take a room together in Boston or New York, eat at the restaurants, and look for something."

"I don't know but I should like going to New York," said Charlie.

By this time they had reached the edge of the woods, and were probably a mile or more from the town. There was no underbrush, but the trees rose clear and erect, and presented a cool and pleasant prospect to the boys, who had become warm with walking. So far as they knew, they were alone, but in this they were mistaken. Mr. Tarbox had some wood-land near by, and he had gone out to look at it, when, alike to his surprise and gratification, his eyes rested on the two boys, whom he at once recognized as belonging to the circus, having seen them ride the evening before. He didn't care particularly for Charlie Davis, but Robert Rudd had been with Anak when he inflicted upon him so mortifying personal chastise-

ment, and he looked upon the boy as an accomplice of the man.

"That's the very boy I wanted to see," said Tarbox to himself, with a cruel smile. "I can't manage that overgrown brute, but I can manage him. I'll give the boy a lesson, and that'll be better than nothing."

Tarbox was naturally a tyrant and a bully, and, like most men of his character, was delighted when he could get hold of a person of inferior strength.

"Oh ho!" he said to himself, "the boy can't escape me now."

"Look here, boy," he said, in an impatient tone.

Robert turned quickly, and saw the frowning face of Tarbox.

CHAPTER X.

TRAPPED.

ROBERT foresaw that trouble was in store for him, as he had seen enough of the farmer to understand his disposition. However, the boy was not easily startled, nor was he of a nervous temperament. He looked calmly at Tarbox and said: "Very well, sir, what do you want of me?"

"What do I want of you? I shouldn't think you'd need to be told. You remember me, don't you?"

"Perfectly well," answered Robert.

"Perhaps you can remember where you saw me last?"

"In the circus last evening."

"No, I don't mean that—before that."

"In your own field, trying to whip a poor boy who was going to call the doctor for his sick mother."

"Look here, boy," said Tarbox, reddening; "none of your impudence!"

"Did I tell the truth?" asked Robert quietly.

"Never mind whether you did or not. I ain't going to stand any of your impudence. Where's that big brute Enoch?"

"If you mean Anak, I left him in the tent."

"He needn't think he can go round insulting and committing assault and battery on his betters," said Tarbox.

"You can tell him that if you like, sir; I am not responsible for him."

"No, but you are responsible for trespassin' on my grounds."

"I would do it again if I saw you trying to flog a defenceless boy," said Robert, independently.

"You would, hey?" sneered Tarbox. "Well, now, you may change your opinion on that subject before we part company."

"Come, Rob, let's be going," said Charlie Davis, who didn't find this conversation interesting.

"You can go," said Tarbox; "I hav'nt anything ag'inst you; but this boy's got to stay."

"What for?" asked Charlie.

"What for? He'll find out what for."

"If you touch him, I'll send Anak after you," said Charlie.

"You will, hey? So you are impudent, too. Well, I'll have to give you a lesson, too."

Tarbox felt that it was time to commence business, and made a grab for Robert's collar, but the boy was agile, and quickly dodging ran to one side.

Charlie Davis laughed, which further annoyed and provoked Mr. Tarbox, but the wrath of the farmer was chiefly directed against Robert, who had witnessed his discomfiture at the hands of the Norwegian giant. He therefore set out to catch the young circus-rider, but Robert was fleet-footed, and led him a fruitless chase around trees, and Tarbox was not able to get his hand on him. What annoyed the farmer especially was that the boy did not seem at all frightened, and it appeared to be no particular effort to him to elude his grasp.

Tarbox was of a dogged, determined disposition, and the more difficult he found it to carry out his purpose the more resolved he was to accomplish it. It would never do to yield to two boys, who both together had less strength than

he. It was different from encountering Anak, who was a match for three ordinary men.

But Tarbox, in spite of his anger, and in spite of his superior strength, was destined to come to grief.

He had not paid any special attention to the younger boy, being intent upon capturing Robert. Charlie, taking advantage of this, picked up a stout stick, which had apparently been cut for a cane and then thrown aside, and took it up first with the intention of defending himself, if necessary. But as Tarbox dashed by without noticing him, a new idea came to Charlie, and thrusting out the stick so that it passed between the legs of the pursuer, Tarbox was thrown violently to the ground, on which he lay for a moment prostrate and bewildered.

"Climb that tree, Rob!" called out Charlie quickly.

Robert accepted the suggestion. He saw that no time was to be lost, and with the quickness of a trained athlete made his way up the trunk and into the branches of a tall tree near at hand, while Charlie with equal quickness took refuge on another.

Tarbox fell with such violence that he was jarred and could not immediately recover from the shock of his fall. When he did rise he was more angry than ever. He looked for the two boys and saw what had become of them. By this time Robert was at least twenty-five feet from the ground.

"Come down here, you, sir!" said the farmer, his voice shaking with passion.

"Thank you, sir," answered Robert coolly; "but at present I find it more agreeable up here."

"Come down here, and I'll give you the worst thrashing you ever had!"

"Your intentions are very kind, but the inducement isn't sufficient."

"If I hadn't fallen just as I did, I'd have had you by this time."

"That's just what I thought when I put the stick between your legs," called out Charlie Davis from another tree.

It may seem singular, but until then Tarbox had not understood how he came to fall. He had an idea that he had tripped over the root of a tree.

"Did you do that?" he asked wrathfully, turning to the smaller boy.

"Yes, I did."

"If I could catch you, you wouldn't get out of this wood alive."

"Then I'm glad you can't get me," said Charlie, looking unconcernedly down upon his stalwart enemy.

"You're two of the worst boys I ever saw," proceeded the farmer, wrathfully.

"And I'm sure you're the worst man I ever saw."

"What's your name?" asked Tarbox, abruptly.

"Charlie Davis; I'm sorry I haven't got my card with me, or I'd throw it down to you."

"I'd like to have the bringing up of you."

"All right! Perhaps I'll appoint you my guardian."

"You're more impudent than the other one, though you ain't so big."

"Are you comin' down?" he inquired of Robert.

"Not at present."

"I won't stir from here till you do, if I have to stay all night."

This was not a cheerful reflection, for the two boys were expected to be present and ride in the evening, and their absence would be regretted,

not only by the manager, but also by the public, with whom they were favorites.

"I say, Rob," called out Charlie, "how fond he is of our company!"

"So it seems!" responded Robert, who was quite cool but rather annoyed by the farmer's persistence.

"I only wish Bruiser were alive!" said Tarbox. "Then I'd know what to do."

"What would you do?" asked Charlie.

"I'd leave him to guard you, and then I'd go home and get my gun."

"What for?"

"I'd soon bring you down if I had that," answered the farmer, grimly.

"If that's what you would do I'm glad old Bruiser's kicked the bucket," said Charlie.

"I never shall get such another dog!" said Tarbox, half to himself, in a mournful voice. "Nobody dared to go across my ground when he was alive."

"Was that the dog that Anak killed?" asked Charlie.

"Yes," answered Robert, briefly. "He was a vicious-looking brute and deserved to die."

At that moment Tarbox chanced to notice the stick which had produced his downfall, and a new idea came to him.

He picked it up, and breaking it in two seized one piece and flung it with all his force at Robert.

The latter caught and flung it back, knocking off the farmer's hat.

Tarbox was naturally incensed, and began again to hurl the missile, but anger disturbed his aim so that this time it went wide of the mark.

"I say, Robert," said Charlie, "this is interesting."

"I'm glad you find it so," answered Robert. "I can't say I enjoy it."

"You may just as well come down and take your thrashing now," said Tarbox, "for you're sure to get it."

"If you're in a hurry to get home to supper, perhaps we'll wait for you here," suggested Charlie, politely.

"Shut up, you saucebox! You won't have much appetite for supper!" retorted Tarbox.

He sat down where he could have a full view of both trees, when presently he heard Charlie

call out in a terrified tone, "Rob, look there! The tiger's got loose! See him coming this way! Can he climb trees?"

Tarbox stopped to hear no more. He sprang to his feet, and without waiting to bid the boys good-by he took to his heels and fled from the wood, feeling that his life was in peril.

CHAPTER XI.

DISMAY AT THE HOME OF TARBOX.

ROBERT quickly understood that Tarbox was the victim of a practical joke, and did his best to help it along. He had amused himself during his connection with the circus in imitating the cries of wild beasts, and now from his perch in the tree reproduced the howl of a wolf so naturally that Tarbox, hearing it, and knowing no better, thought it proceeded from the throat of the tiger. Of course he increased his speed, expecting every moment that the dangerous animal would spring upon him and tear him to pieces.

“If I only had my gun with me,” he reflected in his dismay, “I might be able to defend myself.”

He lost his hat somewhere on the road, and breathless and hatless entered his own back door, shutting and bolting it after him, and with disordered look entered the sitting-room where his

wife was seated, in a comfortable chat with Mrs. Dunlap, a neighbor.

Tarbox sank into a rocking-chair, and, gasping, stared at the two ladies.

“Good gracious, Nathan!” exclaimed his wife, in a flutter; “what on earth has happened?”

“Was anything chasin’ ye?” asked Mrs. Dunlap, unconsciously hitting the mark.

“Yes,” answered Tarbox, in a hollow voice.

“Was it the Norwegian giant?” inquired Mrs. Tarbox, apprehensively.

“Worse!” answered Tarbox, sententiously.

“Worse! Do tell. Good gracious, Nathan, I shall go into a fit if you don’t tell me right off what it was.”

“It was a tiger!” answered her husband, impressively.

“A tiger!” exclaimed both ladies, startled and affrighted.

“Yes, I’ve had a narrow escape of my life.”

“But where did he come from?” asked Mrs. Dunlap.

“Come from? Where should he come from except from the circus? He broke loose and now he’s prowling round, seeking whom he may devour.

"O heavens," exclaimed Mrs. Dunlap, terror-stricken, "and my innocent children are out picking berries in the pasture."

"Tigers are fond of children," said Tarbox, whose hard nature found pleasure in the dismay of the unhappy mother.

"I must go right home and send for the children," said the mother, in an agony of apprehension.

"You may never live to get home," said Tarbox.

"Oh what shall I do?" said Mrs. Dunlap, wringing her hands. "Won't you go home with me, Mr. Tarbox? I can't stay here with my poor children in peril."

"No, I thank you. My life is worth something."

"You might take your gun, Nathan," said Mrs. Tarbox, who was stirred by the grief of her friend.

"Oh yes," said Tarbox, sarcastically; "you're very ready to have your husband's life exposed. You'd like to be a widow. Maybe you think I've left you all my property."

"You know, Nathan, I never thought of that. I only thought of poor Mrs. Dunlap. Think how

sad it would be if Jimmy and Florence Ann were torn to pieces by the terrible tiger."

There was a fresh outburst of grief from the stricken mother at the heart-rending thought, but Mr. Tarbox was not moved.

"Mrs. Tarbox," said he, "if you want to see Mrs. Dunlap home you can take the gun."

"Oh, I shouldn't das't to," said Mrs. Tarbox, hastily. "I—I shouldn't know how to fire it."

"I think you'd be more likely to shoot Mrs. Dunlap than the tiger," said her husband, derisively.

"Where did you come across the—the monster, Nathan?" asked Mrs. Tarbox, shuddering.

"In the woods. I heard him roar. I ran from there as fast as I could come, expecting every minute he would spring upon me."

"Was there any one else in the wood?"

"Yes," answered Tarbox, smiling grimly. "There's two circus boys there. They clumb into trees. I don't know whether tigers can climb or not. If they can they've probably made mince-meat of the boys by this time."

"It's terrible!" said Mrs. Dunlap, shuddering. "Perhaps my innocent darlings are in the clutches of the monster at this very moment."

And the unhappy lady went into a fit of hysterics, from which she was brought to by a strong bottle of hartshorn held to her nose.

It so happened (happily for her) that her husband at this moment knocked at the door. He had gone home to find something, and failing had come to the house of his neighbor to inquire of his wife its whereabouts. Great was his amazement to find his wife in such agitation.

"What's the matter?" he asked, looking about him.

"O Thomas, have you heard the terrible news?" said his wife.

"I haven't heard any terrible news," was the bewildered reply. "Is anybody dead?"

"Our two poor innocent darlings may be dead by this time," sobbed his wife.

"What does it all mean? Where are they?"

"Out in the berry pasture. The tiger may have caught them by this time."

"What tiger?"

"The one that's broken loose from the show."

"I just came from the tent, and they don't know anything there of any tigers breaking loose. Who told you about it?"

"Mr. Tarbox. The tiger chased him all the way home from the woods."

"That is strange. Did you see him, Mr. Tarbox?"

"I heard him roar," answered Tarbox, "and he was close behind me all the way."

"Are you sure it was a tiger?"

"No; it may have been a lion. Anyhow, it was some wild critter."

"O husband, do go after our poor children. And take Mr. Tarbox's gun. I am sure he will lend it to you."

"I may need it myself," said Tarbox, doubtfully.

"Give me a stout stick, and I'll manage," said Mr. Dunlap, who was a more courageous man than his neighbor. "Come along, wife."

"I—I hope, Mrs. Tarbox, we shall meet again," said Mrs. Dunlap, as she kissed her friend a tearful good-by. "I don't feel sure, for we may meet the terrible beasts."

"If you do," said Mrs. Tarbox, with tearful emotion, "I'll come to your funeral."

Somehow this didn't seem to comfort Mrs. Dunlap much, for when they were fairly out of

the house she observed sharply, "That woman's a fool!"

"You seem to like to call on her, Lucinda."

"That's only being neighborly. She has no heart or she wouldn't allude so coolly to my funeral. But do let us be getting home as soon as you can."

"I tell you what, Lucinda, I don't take any stock in this cock-and-bull story of a tiger being loose. I heard nothing of it at the tent."

"But Mr. Tarbox said it chased him."

"Tarbox is a coward. But here are two boys coming; they belong to the circus. I will ask them."

Robert and Charlie Davis were coming up the road. No sooner had their enemy fled than they descended from the trees in whose branches they had taken refuge, and started on their way home, laughing heartily at the farmer's fright.

"I say, boys," said Mr. Dunlap, "don't you two boys belong to the circus?"

"Yes, sir," answered Robert.

"What's this story I hear about a tiger having escaped from his cage?"

"Who told you?" asked Robert.

"Mr. Tarbox."

"Did he see him?"

"He said the tiger chased him all the way home."

Both boys burst into a fit of laughter, rather to the amazement of Mr. Dunlap and his wife. Then they explained how the farmer had been humbugged, and Mr. Dunlap shouted with merriment, for Tarbox was very unpopular in that town, and no one would feel troubled at any deception practised upon him.

"Then the children are safe?" said Mrs. Dunlap, with a sigh of relief. "Don't you think I ought to go and tell Mr. Tarbox?"

"No; let Tarbox stay in the house, like a coward that he is, for fear of the tiger. It's a good joke at his expense. That was a pretty smart trick, boys."

"Old Tarbox will feel like murdering us if he ever finds out the truth," said Charlie.

"He feels so now, so far as I am concerned," said Robert. "I am not afraid of him."

CHAPTER XII.

THE CANVAS MAN.

WHEN Mr. Tarbox came to understand how he had been hoaxed by the boys he was furious, but his anger was ineffectual, for there seemed no way in which he could retaliate. He had had his opportunity in the woods, but that had passed, and was not likely to come again. Meanwhile he found it hard to bear the jocose inquiries of his neighbors touching his encounter with the "tiger."

For instance, the next day he met the constable in the street.

"How are you, Mr. Tarbox?" inquired Spriggins, smiling.

"Well enough," growled Tarbox, quickening his pace.

"I hear you had an adventure with a tiger yesterday," said the constable, with a waggish smile.

"Suppose I did!" he snapped.

"Ho, ho! Were you very much frightened?" continued the constable.

"I wasn't half so much scared as you were when I wanted you to arrest the giant."

It was the constable's turn to look embarrassed. "Who said I was afraid?"

"It was enough to look at you," said Tarbox.

"Well, maybe I was a little flustered," admitted Spriggins. "Who wouldn't be afraid of a man ten feet high? They do say, Tarbox, that you did some pretty tall running, and there wasn't no tiger loose after all."

And Mr. Constable indulged in a chuckle which irritated the farmer intensely. He resolved to retaliate.

"Do you know where I am goin', Spriggins?" he asked.

"No."

"Then I'll tell you," answered Tarbox, with a malicious smile. "I'm goin' to Squire Price to get another warrant for the arrest of Anak—I've found out that that's his name—and I'm goin' to get you to serve it."

The constable's countenance changed. "Don't be foolish, Mr. Tarbox," he said.

"I understand my business, Spriggins, and I shall expect you to do yours. I'll see you again in half an hour."

"I may not be at home; I expect I've got to go over to Medville."

"Then put it off. Your duty to the State is ahead of all private business."

He went on his way leaving Mr. Spriggins in a very uneasy frame of mind. When he went home to supper, he said to his wife: "Mrs. S., after supper I'm going up into the attic, and if Nathan Tarbox comes round and asks for me, you say that I'm out of town."

"But it wouldn't be true, Spriggins," replied his wife.

"I know it won't; but he wants me to arrest the giant, and it's as much as my life is worth," answered the constable, desperately. "I don't think I'm a coward, but I ain't a match for a giant."

The farmer, however, did not come round. He had only made the statement to frighten Spriggins, and retaliate upon him for his joke about the tiger.

In the afternoon Robert, while out for a walk, fell in with one of the canvas men, a rough-look-

ing fellow, named, or at least he called himself, Carden. Canvas men, as may be inferred from the name, are employed in putting up and taking down the circus tent, and are generally an inferior set of men, not differing much from the professional tramp. Robert, who, in spite of his asseverations, had considerable self-respect and proper pride, never mingled much with them, and for that reason was looked upon as "putting on airs." His friend, Charlie Davis, was much more popular with them.

"Hallo, Robert," said Carden, familiarly.

The canvas man was smoking a short, dirty clay pipe, and would have made an admirable model for a picture of a tramp.

"Hello, Carden!" said Robert, coolly.

"Walkin' for your health?" asked the canvas man, in the same disagreeably familiar tone.

"Partly."

Carden was walking by his side, and Robert did not like the familiarity which this would seem to imply.

"Pretty good town, this!" continued Carden, socially.

"Yes."

"Sorry I haven't another pipe to offer you, Robert, my boy."

"Thank you ; I shouldn't use it."

"Don't mean to say you don't smoke, eh, Bob ?"

"I don't smoke."

"That is, not a pipe—I dare say you wouldn't mind a cigar or cigarette, now."

"I don't smoke at all now. I did once, but found it was injuring me, and gave it up."

"Oh, it won't hurt you. I've smoked since I was a chap so high"—indicating a point about three feet from the ground—"and I ain't dead yet."

Robert did not reply to this, but looked around anxiously for some pretext to leave his unwelcome companion.

Just then they passed a wayside saloon.

"Come in, Bob, and have a drink !" said Carden, laying his hand upon the boy's shoulder. "It'll do you good to whet your whistle."

"No, thank you," said Robert, shrinking from the man's touch.

"Oh, don't be foolish. A little whiskey'll do you good."

"Thank you, I would rather not."

Meantime Carden was searching in his pocket for a silver coin, but his search was fruitless.

"I say, Bob, I am out of tin. Come in and treat?"

"You must excuse me, Mr. Carden," said Robert, coldly.

"Come, don't be stingy! You get good pay, and can afford to stand treat. We poor canvas men only have \$15 a month."

"If this will do you any good," said Robert, producing a silver quarter, "you are welcome to it."

"Thank you; you'd better come in, too."

Robert sacrificed the coin to regain his freedom, as Carden's entering the saloon seemed to offer the only mode of release.

"What a stuck-up young jackanapes!" muttered Carden, as he entered the saloon. "He thinks a deal of himself, and don't want to have nought to do with me because I'm a poor canvas man. I doubt he's got a good deal of money hid away somewhere, for he don't spend much. I heard Charlie Davis say the other day Bob had \$200."

Carden's eyes glittered with cupidity as the thought passed through his mind.

"I'd like to get hold of it," he muttered to him-

self. "It would be a fortune for a poor canvas man, and he wouldn't miss it, for he could soon gain as much more. I wonder where he keeps it."

"It's the worst of the life I lead," said Robert to himself, as he walked on, "that I am thrown into the company of such men as that. It isn't because they are poor that I object to them, for I am not rich myself; but a man needn't be low because he is poor and earning small pay. I suppose Carden and the other canvas men think I am proud because I don't seek their company, but they are mistaken. I have nothing in common with them, except that we are all in the employ of the same manager. Besides, I do talk with Madigan. He is a canvas man, but he has had a good education and is fitted for something better, and only takes up with this rather than be idle."

Half an hour after, Charlie Davis joined him.

"Rob," said Charlie, "I met Carden, just now. He was half drunk, and pitching into you."

"He ought not, for I had just lent him a quarter."

"He said you were too proud to drink with him."

"That is true, though I wouldn't drink with one I had more respect for."

"He asked me where you kept your money. You'd better look out for him."

"I shall. I have no doubt he is capable of robbing me, and I would rather spend my own money myself."

"I'm not afraid of his robbing me," said Charlie.

"No, I suppose not ; but I wish you would save some of your money, so as to have something worth stealing."

"Oh, I'll begin to save sometime."

It was perhaps the thought of this conversation that led Robert in the evening after the entertainment was over, or rather after his part of it was over, to walk round to one of the circus wagons, in which, in a small closet, he kept some of his clothing and the whole of his money.

As he came up he saw in the darkness the crouching figure of a man trying the lock of his compartment with one of a bunch of keys he held in his hand.

CHAPTER XIII.

CATCHING A THIEF.

“**W**HAT are you doing here?” demanded Robert, in a quick, imperious tone.

The man, like all who are engaged in a disreputable deed, started suddenly and half rose from his crouching position, still holding the keys in his hand. He did not answer immediately, probably because it was rather difficult to decide what to say.

“What are you doing here?” demanded Robert, once more.

“None of your business!” answered the man, whose temper got the better of his prudence.

“I should think it was my business, as you were trying to get at my property.”

“That’s a lie!” said the man, sullenly.

As he spoke he stepped out of the wagon, and Robert recognized him as the canvas man, Carden, introduced in the last chapter.

"It's the truth," said Rober; firmly. "I know you, Carden, and I am not much surprised. It won't do to try it again."

"I've a great mind to thrash you for your impudence!" growled Carden.

"I can defend myself," returned Robert, coolly, who had plenty of courage.

Carden laughed derisively.

"What can you do?" he said. "You'd be like a baby in my grasp."

"I am not afraid of you," said Robert, with composure. "Don't come around here again."

"I shall go where I please," said Carden, with the addition of an oath. "And don't you go to telling tales of me, or I'll wring your neck."

Robert did not answer, but when Carden had slunk away, opened the locker himself, and took out a wallet filled with bills.

"It is imprudent to leave so much money here," he reflected. "If I hadn't come up just as I did, Carden would have got hold of it. What shall I do with it?"

Robert felt that it would not do to carry it round with him, as that would be about as imprudent as to leave it in the locker. He decided

after a little reflection upon leaving it with the manager of the circus, in whom he had every confidence, and deservedly. He accordingly sought Mr. Coleman after the entertainment was over.

“Well, Robert, what is it?” asked the manager, kindly.

“I have a favor to ask of you, sir.”

“Very well; what is it?”

“I came near losing all my savings to-night. Will you take charge of this wallet for me? I don’t feel safe with it in my possession.”

“Certainly, Robert. How much money have you here?”

“Two hundred dollars.”

“Whew! You are rich. You say you came near losing it?”

“Yes, to-night.”

“How was that?”

Robert detailed his visit to his locker, and his discovery of the canvas man attempting to open it, but he mentioned no names.

“Which of the canvas men was it?” asked Mr. Coleman.

Robert hesitated.

"I don't want to get the man into trouble," he said.

"That does you credit, but if we have a thief with us it is important that we should know it, for there are others whom he may try to rob."

From what he knew of Carden, Robert felt that the apprehension was very well founded, and he saw that it was his duty to mention the name of the thief.

"It was Carden," he answered.

"The very man I suspected," said the manager. "The other men are rough, but he looks like a scoundrel. He came to me and begged for work, and I engaged him, though I knew nothing about him. I shall see him in the morning, and discharge him."

The manager did not forget. The next morning he summoned Carden, and said, quietly, "Carden, you are no longer in my employ. I will pay you to the end of the week, but I want you to leave now."

"What's that for?" growled the canvas man, looking ugly.

"It's on account of what happened last night," said the manager.

"Has that young fool been blabbing about me?"

"I have said nothing about any one."

"No, but I know Robert Rudd's been telling tales about me."

"He answered my questions, but said he didn't want to get you into trouble."

"Of course not!" sneered Carden. "He's a nice boy, he is; the young liar."

"You seem to know what he said," observed the manager, eying the man keenly.

"I s'pose he said I was tryin' to rob him."

"He did, and I believed him."

"Then he lied!" said the man, fiercely. "He'll repent the day he told tales about me."

"That will do, Carden," said the manager, quietly. "Here's your money."

Carden went off swearing. As he was leaving the grounds of the circus he met Robert.

"You've been blabbing about me. I'll fix you," he said.

Robert made no reply, for he did not care to get into a dispute with such a man.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHESTNUTWOOD.

WE must now change the scene to a fine estate in the interior of New York State, near one of the beautiful lakes which give such a charm to the surrounding landscape.

The estate was a large one, laid out in the English style, with a fine mansion centrally located and elegantly furnished. Surely the owner of this fine domain was worthy of envy, and ought to have been happy.

Let us enter the breakfast room and make acquaintance with him.

There he sits in an easy-chair, a white-haired, shrunken old man, his face deeply lined, and wearing a weary expression as if the world afforded him little satisfaction.

It was the same old man whom we last saw in the circus at Crampton. He had gone home with his nephew at once, having become weary of

travel. It was wise, perhaps ; for he was old, and to the old rest is welcome.

His nephew sat near by with a daily paper in his hand, from which he appeared to have been reading to his uncle.

"That will do, Hugo," said the old man. "I—I don't find any interest in the paper this morning."

"How are you feeling, uncle—as well as usual?"

"Well in health—that is, as well as I can expect to feel, but my life is empty. I have nothing to live for."

"Why don't you die then?" thought the nephew, but he did not express his thought. On the contrary, he said, "Surely, uncle, you have much to live for. You are rich, honored."

"But I have no one to love me, Hugo," said the old man, plaintively, "no one of my own blood. My son is dead, and his son—do you know, Hugo," he continued in a different voice, "I cannot get out of my mind that boy we saw in the circus?"

Hugo shrugged his shoulder, but did not venture to express the annoyance he felt.

"You mean the—the O'Connor boy," he said indifferently.

"O'Connor!" replied his uncle, in surprise.
"You told me his name was Oliver Brown."

"Did I?" said Hugo, flushing. "Oh, well, I had forgotten. The name didn't impress me. I thought he was an Irish boy."

"You said he was born in Montreal, and that his parents lived there now."

"Oh, well, no doubt you are right, uncle: you know I didn't take as much interest in him as you—"

"True, Hugo; but surely you could detect the wonderful resemblance to my son Julian."

"I can't say I did, uncle; but probably we looked at him with different eyes."

"That was natural. How much do you think they pay him in the circus, Hugo?"

"Really, uncle, I haven't the slightest idea. I never knew any circus people. Four or five dollars a week, perhaps."

"I have been thinking, Hugo, I should like to have that boy live with me."

"You can't be in earnest, uncle," said Hugo, very disagreeably surprised.

"Why not? He may not be akin to me; but he looks like my dead son, and for that resem-

blance I could come to love him. It would be a great comfort to me to see him every day, and have him come in and out. He might read to me, and so relieve you of some of your duties, Hugo."

"But I have never asked to be relieved of them, uncle," said Hugo, bashfully.

"I know that, Hugo, but he would be company for us both. I want you to go and bring him back with you. You can find out how much they pay him at the circus, and offer him more to come here. I will give him a chance to study, engage masters for him, and—"

"Make him your heir, I suppose," said Hugo to himself, with a dark frown, which his uncle did not see; "not if I am able to prevent it. My uncle must think I am a fool to bring into the house so dangerous a rival. After waiting so many weary years for Chestnutwood, does he think I am going to let it drift into the hands of an unknown boy simply because he looks like my cousin Julian?"

These thoughts passed through the mind of Hugo Richmond, but it is needless to say that he did not give utterance to them, or to anything

like them. His course was not to oppose strongly any whim of his uncle, but to seemingly assent, and then oppose it secretly, while the old man thought him to be promoting it.

Nevertheless Hugo was very much annoyed at the present caprice of his uncle, as he chose to style it.

"I wish I had never gone into that circus," he reflected, with annoyance. "Till then my uncle's mind was at rest, and he didn't trouble himself with the thought that Julian's son might still be alive. Now the mischief has been done, and the sight of that boy has upset him and endangered my prospects. Who would have thought that such a chance visit would have led to such results? Well, well, it is going to give me some trouble, but I am master of the situation, and my uncle shall never again set eyes on that boy if I can prevent it."

Hugo took his hat and went out to look after some laborers who were at work in the rear of the lawn, when his attention was drawn to a rather shabby-looking figure approaching the house.

CHAPTER XV.

A COMPACT.

HUGO stopped short, till the stranger should come up. He intended to warn him off the grounds, as an intruder.

"Look here, my man," he said, with an air of authority, "are you aware that these are private grounds?"

"I suppose they are," said the intruder, smiling.

Hugo was surprised to see that he showed no confusion or timidity, but stood his ground boldly. The fellow's unconcern nettled him.

"Then, if you suppose they are," he said, sharply, "you must know that you are trespassing. You can have no business here, and the best course, if you wish to avoid trouble, is to turn about and gain the highway as speedily as possible."

Hugo fancied that this would be sufficient to put the intruder to flight, but he was mistaken.

"Who told you I had no business here?" he asked.

"Don't be impertinent! A man like you can have no business here unless you wish to obtain a position as laborer, and we have no vacancy of that kind."

The intruder held out his hands and said, quietly: "Do them look like the hands of a laborer?"

Hugo glanced at them. They were as white and unsoiled by any of the outward evidences of manual labor as his own. Yet the man was shabbily dressed, and looked poor. Be that as it might, he had never been accustomed to labor with his hands.

"No," answered Hugo, "but that isn't in your favor. However, I have no further time to waste with you. Leave these grounds at once."

"Not until I have had some further conversation with you, Mr. Hugo Richmond," said the visitor, regarding Hugo fixedly.

"Who are you?" demanded Hugo, abruptly. "You know my name, it seems. Have I ever known you?"

"Yes."

"What is your name?"

"Fitzgerald."

"I aver that you are he," said Hugo, after a brief glance of scrutiny, "though I should hardly have known you. I am glad you are come. I was wishing particularly to see you."

Fitzgerald looked surprised. He had fancied that he would be an unwelcome, perhaps a dreaded apparition, yet here was the man who he had thought would be disturbed at his appearance actually expressing his pleasure at meeting him.

"Then I am glad I came," he said. "I thought perhaps you would be sorry to see me."

"So I should have been a week since. Now something has occurred which makes a meeting between us desirable."

"Is your uncle dead?" asked the visitor, with eager interest.

"No, he is still living," returned Hugo, with a half unconscious sigh of regret. "Walk with me to yonder summer-house. I must have some serious conversation with you."

Fitzgerald followed, wondering considerably what Hugo had to say to him, and the two sat down in a summer-house or rustic arbor at some

distance from the house, where there were not likely to be any listeners to their speech.

When they were seated Hugo asked abruptly, "What did you do with Julian's boy?"

Fitzgerald started in some surprise, and perhaps embarrassment, and answered, "You know very well, Mr. Hugo. He died of scarlet fever."

"So you reported, and I was quite ready to accept the report without inquiring into particulars. Now I have reason to doubt your statement."

"Oh, well, he may have died of something else," said Fitzgerald, shrugging his shoulders. "As long as he died, I suppose it didn't matter to you what was the nature of his disease?"

"Not if he were really dead."

"You don't doubt that, do you?"

"Yes, I do; moreover, I am quite convinced that it is false."

"Then you had better keep it to yourself," suggested Fitzgerald with a cunning smile, "since the boy, if alive, would be his grandfather's heir."

"But suppose his grandfather suspects he is living?"

"That would alter matters. But why should he suspect?"

"Fitzgerald, do you know where this boy is?" asked Hugo, searchingly.

"I don't even know that he is living. If you do you know more than I do about him."

"You know, at least, that he did not die at the time you reported his death."

"Well, I don't mind confessing as much as that."

"*You played me false!*" said Hugo, with angry bitterness.

"Suppose I did?" retorted Fitzgerald, defiantly. "That's better than to kill an innocent boy, isn't it?"

"Hush!" exclaimed Hugo, in alarm. "Don't use such words. They might be overheard."

"How do you know the boy is alive?" asked Fitzgerald, after a pause.

"I saw him myself within a week."

"Where?"

"At Crampton, in a circus performance; the boy was riding bareback in the ring. He is called on the bills, 'The Boy Wonder,' and is a daring and graceful rider. Julian was always fond of horses."

"What name does he bear?"

"Robert Rudd."

"Are you sure it is Julian's son?"

"As sure as I need be. He is the perfect image of my cousin at his age."

"The boy has no suspicion of his origin, I suppose?"

"Not the slightest."

"Then why need you be troubled?"

"Because my uncle was with me, and he, too, noticed the extraordinary resemblance of the boy-rider to his son. Ever since he has been restless, and now he insists upon my seeking out the boy, and bringing him here to live with him."

Fitzgerald whistled.

"That would make a dark lookout for you, Mr. Hugo," he said.

"Of course it would. Besides, if the boy knew anything of his past history, my uncle would be readily convinced that it was really his grandson, and I would be set aside as the heir to Chestnut-wood."

"I see."

"Now tell me, Fitzgerald, how does it happen that the boy has been trained up to such a career?"

"I can't tell positively. I gave a tramp a sum of money to take charge of him and carry him about, passing him off as his own son. I suppose the man died and the boy fell in with some circus people, who saw that they could make use of him."

"That seems plausible enough," said Hugo, thoughtfully. "At any rate our concern is not with the past, but with the future. I suppose you are not exactly prosperous?"

Fitzgerald drew a purse from his pocket, and extracted a twenty-five cent coin.

"That is all the money I have," he answered.

"Do you feel like going into my employment again?"

"Yes."

"Then we will see if between us we cannot stave off this danger which threatens my prospects."

There was a lengthened conference, into the particulars of which we need not enter, stating only that Robert was the subject of it. Fitzgerald left Chestnutwood that same evening, plentifully supplied with money.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CANVAS MAN.

CARDEN, the canvas man, though discharged from the circus, did not leave town. He hoped to be reinstated in his old position, and made a personal appeal to the manager. But the latter returned a decided negative.

"Don't I do my work well?" asked Carden.

"I have no fault to find with you on that score."

"Then why do you discharge me?"

"You know well enough."

"Is it because that boy Robert Rudd has lied about me?"

"Robert Rudd would not lie about anybody. I have perfect confidence in him. As for you, Carden, you may as well make up your mind to leave the town and seek employment elsewhere. As long as I am manager of this circus I will never again employ you in any capacity."

Carden's face grew dark and lowering. He

saw that the manager was in earnest, and he said no more, but went away muttering something to himself in a low voice which the manager could not understand.

"That is a bad fellow!" thought Mr. Coleman. "We are well rid of him. He looks as if he could do something worse than steal."

Finding himself foiled in his attempt to regain his old place, Carden felt still more incensed against the boy, whom he considered to be the cause of his dismissal. He felt that it would be a satisfaction to injure him in some way, and so revenge himself. For this purpose he determined to remain in the town until the circus left. He secured board, therefore, in the family of a farmer not far away, and spent his days about the village and his evenings in some low drinking place.

One day as he was sauntering along the street, with a discontented scowl upon his face, he came face to face with a well-dressed man, who appeared to be a stranger in the place.

He would have passed him by without any other notice than a passing glance, had not the stranger accosted him.

"A pleasant day, my friend," he said, affably.

"Who said I was your friend?" returned Carden, with a growl.

"I assumed it, since you have no reason to be my enemy," said the other, not in the least put out by the roughness with which his greeting was received.

"I don't know you, and I don't want to," continued Carden.

"Really, you are very frank," laughed the new acquaintance. "A trifle rough, perhaps, but I like sincerity. You are no hypocrite, my friend."

"I should like to hear anybody call me so," said Carden, defiantly.

"I won't be the one at any rate. However, its dry talking in the street. Suppose we go in here (they were just passing a drinking saloon) and drink to our better acquaintance."

He could have said nothing better calculated to soften Carden's asperity.

"I believe you're a trump, after all," said the canvas man, in a changed tone.

"I hope you'll find me so. Well, come in."

Carden readily followed him into the saloon, and they sat down to a table with a bottle and two glasses before them.

"Now, what's your game?" asked Carden, abruptly.

"My game?"

"Yes. I s'pose you wouldn't have stood treat if you hadn't wanted something of me."

The stranger laughed.

"You are sharp," said he. "However, I don't mind confessing that I am a stranger in the place and wanted company and possibly a little information. Do you know anything about the circus—Coleman's circus—which I see is showing here?"

"I ought to. I belong to it."

"Oh, you are connected with it."

"No. I'm not now. I was."

"So, you left them."

"Left them," repeated Carden with an oath. "I was kicked out."

"Indeed, my friend, I sympathize with you. May I ask in what capacity you were employed?"

"I was a canvas man."

"Really, I don't want to meddle with what is none of my business, but on what pretext were you discharged?"

Carden hardly liked to admit that he was suspected of theft, but his wrongs were recent and

he took a bitter satisfaction in dwelling upon them. So he overcame his reluctance by degrees.

"It was all on account of that young rascal Robert Rudd," he said.

"Robert Rudd!" repeated the stranger, his face indicating strong interest. "Who is he?"

"A bareback rider—a mere boy, whom I could twist round my finger."

"But I don't see how he could get you discharged."

"Then I'll tell you. He went to Coleman and told him that he found me trying to unlock his closet and get at his property."

"Of course that was false?"

"Of course it was!" growled Carden. "But the manager believed him, and bounced me."

"What could make the boy get up such a story?"

"He hated me; he treated me like a dog, and put on airs, just as if we wasn't in the same business. He wouldn't drink with me when I asked him."

"Then he is proud, is he?"

"Yes, but he hasn't anything to be proud of. He thinks himself a gentleman, just because he

can ride, and looks down on me as a poor canvas man."

"He must be very disagreeable!"

"Of course he is, but the manager don't think so. He treats him as if he was a prince."

"Do you know anything about this Robert Rudd?" asked the stranger, thoughtfully. "Has he got parents living?"

"Not as I know of."

"How long has he been with the circus?"

"He has been riding ever since he was a small kid."

"Does he ride well?"

"Oh yes, he'll do," said Carden, with faint praise.

"I should think he would have been afraid to provoke you—a strong, stout man like you," said the stranger meditatively, surveying the strong frame and muscular arms of the ex-canvas man.

"He'll repent it yet," flamed up Carden, his resentment fired by these artful words. "I don't mean to have any whipper-snapper like him get the better of me."

"I can't say you are wrong, my friend, though I know nothing of the matter further than you

have told me. What are your plans? When were you discharged?"

"Day before yesterday. Coleman told me to leave town, but I shan't. I shall hang round here till I see some way of gettin' even with that young rascal."

"It does seem hard that you should have had your means of living taken away from you through the spite of a boy. He must have a very bad disposition, this Robert Rudd."

"Yes," said Carden, in a voice which was becoming thick through his frequent potations, for he was drinking two glasses or more to the stranger's one. "I'm a poor man, and it's hard to be thrown out of work."

"I suppose you haven't saved up much money, then?"

"Saved! What could I save out of fifteen dollars a month?"

"That is poor pay, certainly. Is this boy, Robert Rudd, well paid?"

"Well paid? He's got two hundred dollars saved up."

"You don't tell me so! That is a good deal for a boy. Where does he keep it?"

"In his locker," answered Carden, an expression of cupidity sweeping over his face.

This was not unnoticed by the stranger, who said to himself: "Unless I am greatly mistaken, the boy was right in charging you with trying to get at his hoard. I can read it in your face."

"You say he is a fine rider?" he said, changing the subject.

"Oh, yes; he's well enough."

"But if anything should startle the horse or frighten him, anything unexpectedly, I mean, he would be in some danger of being thrown off, wouldn't he?"

"That's so!" said Carden, as if a sudden idea had dawned upon his mind.

"It seems a dangerous business, this," said the stranger, carelessly. "If, now, some malicious person should throw something at the horse when he was in the ring, it might prove dangerous to the boy."

"So it would!" said Carden, eagerly.

"Well, my friend," said the stranger, rising, "I see we've drained the bottle. Suppose we go out again."

When they emerged into the street, Fitzgerald,

for it was he, shook hands with the canvas man, and said: "Well, I must go back to the hotel. I hope to meet you again, my friend."

"I think I've set things in train," thought Fitzgerald. "I will attend the circus this evening."

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ATHLETIC CONTEST.

THE two boy riders were taking their usual afternoon walk, when they met Carden. The canvas man frowned, but his face seemed also to wear an expression of triumphant malice, as if he could foresee some evil in store for Robert.

"Did you notice how Carden looked, Robert?" asked Charlie.

"Not very pleasant. He hasn't forgotten me for detecting him in his attempt to rob me."

"He looked as if he had heard of some bad luck for you."

"That must be your imagination, Charlie. I've had no bad luck."

"I wonder what makes Carden stay here now he is discharged from the circus," said Charlie, thoughtfully.

"I suppose he can stay here as cheap as any-

where," said Robert. "I don't trouble myself about him or his plans."

"He is your enemy, Rob. He may try to do you some harm."

"I will be on my guard, but I won't worry myself about it."

They came to an open field, where half a dozen boys were engaged in athletic sports. There was soon to be a picnic, and prizes had been offered for the best running, leaping and vaulting, and these boys were engaged in practising for the grand contest.

"Let us stop and look at them," said Charlie.

"Very well," answered his friend.

So they took up a position about fifty feet away and regarded the contestants with interest.

Their presence was noticed by the boys, who at once recognized them as circus riders.

"Let us invite them to join us," said Frank Perry, a boy of sixteen.

"Yes," chimed in several others.

"I object," said Ronald Percy, stiffly. "My father wouldn't care to have me associate with circus performers."

Ronald was the son of a rich manufacturer, and

was generally considered snobbish by his companions. At any rate he presumed greatly upon his "blue blood" and his father's wealth, and attempted to be very exclusive. It certainly was nothing to the discredit of his father that he had worked his way up to his present position from the position of a poor factory boy, but it might have led Ronald to reflect upon the folly of his personal pretensions. But his mother claimed to be of "genteel" family, and had imbued the boy with her own notions.

"What's the objection, if they are circus performers?" asked Sidney Grey, who might really have claimed aristocratic lineage if he had so desired.

"Do you consider circus performers fit company for you?" asked Ronald, superciliously.

"Yes, if they behave themselves like gentlemen; and these two look as well bred as we are."

"Of course they do," said Frank Perry. "Let us have them here."

This seemed to be the general wish, and Ronald's protest went for nothing.

Sidney Grey left the group of boys and walked towards where Robert and Charlie were standing.

He was a slender boy with a frank, pleasant face which prepossessed a stranger in his favor at first sight.

“Won’t you join us?” he asked. “We are practising for the picnic next Saturday. There are to be some prizes offered for running, vaulting, and so on.”

“Thank you,” answered Robert. “I will join you with pleasure.”

“So will I,” said Charlie, “but I am afraid I might beat you all in jumping.”

“We will take the risk,” said Sydney, smiling.

“We are just going to have some leaping, and will give you a chance. Perhaps it is lucky you won’t be at the picnic.”

Sidney returned to his friends, followed by the two circus boys.

The trial about to commence was a standing jump. The two rivals for superiority were Sidney and Ronald. They were of about the same size, and seemed, so far as appearance went, very well matched. Probably there was nothing, save his family and position, of which Ronald was more proud than of his jumping, and he looked

forward complacently to the trial which was now about to take place.

"Will you try first?" asked Sidney of Robert.

"No, thank you; I will wait to the end."

"Won't you?" he next asked of Charlie Davis.

"I don't mind," answered Charlie, readily.

Charlie was small of his age, and was not likely to be a very formidable competitor. He made a jump which proved to be a little less than five feet, and was not bad for a boy of his size who was not accustomed to this kind of exercise.

"There, boys, beat that if you can," he said, of course in fun.

The boys smiled and the trial continued.

It is unnecessary to chronicle each jump. Sidney Grey came up at last and jumped six feet and three inches.

"Very well, Sidney," said one of his friends.

"I don't believe that will be beat."

"I do," said Ronald, emphatically. "I haven't tried yet."

"Take your turn, then," said Sidney, good-naturedly. "I shouldn't be surprised if you beat me."

Ronald appeared to be of the same opinion, and

it turned out that his expectations were fulfilled. He gathered himself up for a tremendous effort, and cleared six feet four inches.

"Good!" said Sidney, not disturbed by his rival's success. If you jump like this next Saturday you will carry off the prize."

"I've beat you all," said Ronald, triumphantly.

"Not quite all," said Sidney. "There's one here who hasn't jumped yet," pointing to Robert.

"Oh well, he can try if he wants to," said Ronald, superciliously, looking as if he thought it didn't matter much whether he did or not.

"Your name is Robert, isn't it?" said Sidney.

"Yes."

"Then, Robert, you will have the honor of closing this contest."

Under ordinary circumstances Robert would not have cared to win, but he had chanced to overhear Ronald's objections to associating with circus performers, and had noticed the airs of superiority which he assumed, and he thought he would like to take down his pride a little. His training had given him unusual strength and elasticity of limb, and he was better prepared than any of the other boys to excel in a contest of this kind.

He took the position which had been marked as the starting point, and standing for a moment motionless, made a sudden spring forward, and the result was regarded with admiring astonishment.

"Six feet and eight inches!" declared Sidney, after measuring. "You are the champion, Robert. None of us can come up with you."

The face of Ronald was an interesting study. He was astonished and mortified. He couldn't bear to have his record surpassed.

"It wan't a fair leap," he said with chagrin. "He stood too far forward."

"No, he didn't, answered, Sidney; "I noticed how he stood myself."

"If you like, I will jump again," said Robert quietly, turning to Ronald.

"That will be fairer," said Ronald, hoping Robert would the second time fall short of his own mark.

Again Robert took his place, and would not jump till Ronald himself had declared that he was in the right place. Then, making an extra effort, he cleared six feet and nine inches.

"You didn't make much by your doubting,

Ronald," said Frank Perry. "Are you satisfied now?"

"I didn't bargain to jump against a circus boy," said Ronald, sullenly.

"That won't affect your chances at the picnic," said Sidney. "Robert won't be there."

"Nor I," said Charlie Davis.

"We are not much afraid of you, Charlie," said Sidney, smiling.

"Oh, I didn't half try!" said Charlie.

"It's lucky for us you didn't," said Sidney.

Ronald walked off in disgust, but Robert and Charlie remained with their new friends, whom they found pleasant and companionable. That was the last of the contests, but a game of ball was got up, in which the two circus boys joined.

When they were ready to part Sidney said, in a friendly way, "I am glad to have made your acquaintance. Come and see me to-morrow afternoon if you feel like it. I should like to ask you something of your life and adventures, for I suppose you have had adventures."

"Thank you; I will come," answered Robert.

But circumstances arose which prevented his keeping his engagement.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CANVAS MAN FINDS A BONANZA.

FITZGERALD had put a new idea into the head of the canvas man—an idea which the man's unscrupulous and cruel nature readily welcomed and adopted. It was with malicious satisfaction that he thought it over, and considered how he should carry it out.

There was, however one circumstance that interfered with his cheerfulness—the want of money. He had never been a saving man, and now that he was discharged, and without an income, his fortunes were at a low ebb. He foresaw that after carrying out his purpose it would be necessary for him to leave Crampton, but as his purse contained but seventy-five cents it did not seem possible to go far unless he walked.

“If I had only got that boy's \$200, I should be all right,” he said to himself. “It would have been better for him and for me, too, for in that case I wouldn't do him any harm.”





THE ACCIDENT IN THE RING.

Carden had no friends of whom he could ask a loan with any hope of success—in fact, it is doubtful whether he had any friends at all. While in this perplexity he chanced to recall a conversation he had heard some days before in a billiard saloon. It ran thus :

“Yes, Tarbox has more money than any farmer in town. He is mean and close-fisted, and so spends next to nothing. Of course when that is kept up year after year a man can’t help getting rich.”

“Where does he invest his money—in savings banks?”

“No, he is afraid of them. He is of a suspicious nature, and I shouldn’t wonder if he follows the example of an old uncle of his who died twenty years ago.”

“How is that?”

“Why, the old man lived in a miserable way in a poor hut, and after he died it was found that he had secreted large sums in various places in and about the hut. I don’t know how many thousand dollars.”

“Did Nathan Tarbox inherit any of his uncle’s money?”

"Yes, he came in for a third of it."

"You think he hides his money in the same way?"

"I think it very probable. Of course it is very silly, for he gets no interest, and he is really in more danger of losing it than if it were earning dividends of interest in some good bank. However, that's the man's nature."

In his necessity Carden recalled this conversation, and, having no conscientious scruples, he pondered how he should turn it to account.

"If I could find one of the farmer's hiding-places for his money," he thought, "I might make a good thing out of it. The money isn't doing him any good. I might as well have it."

He mechanically took his way towards the Tarbox farm, impelled by a faint hope that he might hear or see something to his advantage.

Now it chanced that at some distance from the farm-house was an old barn, which had been built by the farmer's father, and which was still used, though a newer one had been built nearer the house.

From the street, towards the close of the afternoon, Carden saw Mr. Tarbox taking his way to-

wards this old barn, and out of curiosity he jumped over the stone wall and followed him.

"I wonder if it would do any good to ask him to lend me five dollars?" thought the canvas man. "I might tell him I had been discharged through the influence of Anak and the boy, and he has reason to hate both. At any rate it won't do any harm to try. So I'll follow him cautiously, and see if I can accomplish anything."

Mr. Tarbox did not perceive that he was followed. He went by a well-worn path to the old barn, and, opening a small door at the side, went in.

Carden came up presently and peered in through a crack of the door. The crack was narrow, but still wide enough to enable him to see what was going on within.

Carden was actuated at first by mere curiosity, but his curiosity speedily gave place to deep interest when he saw Tarbox lift a trap door and prepare to descend into the barn cellar.

"What is he going to do, I wonder?" thought the canvas man.

He was disappointed to find that the farmer and his operations were concealed from him, as,

though he could see the trap door, he could not look down into the cellar. Of course it was possible to enter the barn and look down, but this would be too venturesome, and, if he were observed it would be hard to explain his curiosity in any satisfactory manner.

However, it occurred to the eager looker-on that it might be possible for him to look down into the barn cellar through some crevice near the bottom of the barn. No sooner had the idea come into his mind than he discovered exactly such an opening as he desired. He lost no time in throwing himself flat upon the ground, and putting his eye to a round hole—once a knot hole.

Now his curiosity was gratified. Through this loop-hole he saw the farmer with a small spade in his hand, which he appeared to keep permanently under the barn, digging at a particular spot in the northeast corner, only a few feet from the ladder beneath the trap-door.

Carden's heart beat high at this sight. It naturally recalled to him the conversation he had heard in the billiard saloon, and putting the two together he jumped to the conclusion that Tarbox had

come to this out-of-the-way spot to visit one of his hoards—perhaps to add to it.

“If it should be so,” he muttered to himself, “then I am in luck. It won’t be my fault if I don’t borrow a good sum without the farmer knowing anything about it. Let me see what he is doing.”

He glued his eyes persistently to the loop-hole, and watched with an anxious eagerness which can be surmised the movements of the miserly farmer.

Tarbox did not need to dig long. Presently he threw aside his spade, and getting on his knees began to fumble with his hands in the cavity he had made.

He drew up a round wooden box, such as housewives often use to keep saleratus or other supplies in, about the size of a market box of strawberries. Probably it was one he had taken from the pantry without his wife’s observation, for Tarbox was a man who could keep a secret from his wife, at any rate when it related to money.

When Carden saw this box produced his suspicions were increased almost to certainties, and he waited with breathless anxiety till Tarbox should open it.

This the farmer did not long delay doing, and the unseen witness was rewarded for his watching in seeing that the box was more than half full of silver and gold. The silver preponderated, but a few gold coins were mixed with them.

Carden felt like a hungry man favored with the sight of a rich repast, and his eyes glittered with cupidity. He would like to have made his way at once to the cellar, throttled the farmer and seized the box, but that would have been very imprudent. Tarbox was a powerful man, and he would have fought desperately for the money that was so dear to him. Besides, even had Carden secured the box, he could have hardly got away in the afternoon without being observed. No, he must curb his impatience, and defer his visit to a more seasonable time.

"I can do it to-night," he muttered to himself, "after the performance is over. Then I will get out of town as soon as I can. I wonder how much money there is there."

This was a fruitful and pleasing subject of contemplation, and occupied his thoughts as he hurriedly left the barn and made his way to the high road.

He went to his boarding-place, made his small possessions in the way of clothing into a bundle, and regarded it with satisfaction.

"To-night I will leave Crampton forever," he said. "After all, I shall be in fair luck, even if I did get kicked out from the circus."

There was one thing, however, that he did not take into the account. He had acted as a spy upon the unsuspecting farmer, and so became the possessor of a valuable secret. It didn't occur to him that possibly he in turn might have attracted observation, and that his movements might have been watched.

It chanced that Charlie Davis was strolling out alone, and had seen Carden enter Mr. Tarbox's field and make his way to the barn.

"What can Carden be going there for?" thought Charlie. "I'll watch him."

Charlie had also seen Mr. Tarbox, and he was not slow in concluding that Carden, for some reason which he could not at once guess, was watching him.

"What in the world can Carden be looking at?" he thought. "There can't be anything to steal in that old barn. At any rate he's up to some mis-

chief, I'll bet a hat. I'll tell—let me see—I'll tell Anak, and ask what he thinks about it."

It was 6 o'clock when Charlie returned to the circus tent, and he broached the subject at once to the Norwegian giant.

Anak was a shrewd fellow, and he guessed the truth.

"There's something valuable there on which Carden has some designs, but he isn't likely to do anything till late to-night. Meet me after the performance, and we'll take a stroll over that way."

CHAPTER XIX.

A FARCE AND A TRAGEDY.

THE circus was nearing the close of its stay in Crampton. Of course, though it was a large town, it was not large enough to warrant the show in staying so long, but for the large number of visitors who were attracted from neighboring towns. Both by rail and by carriages of all sorts, from farmers' wagons to top buggies and carryalls, hundreds of people flocked to see the wonders it contained. Many a young heart was stirred with ambition to pursue the noble profession of circus performers, considering that the circus clown was as illustrious a personage, not perhaps as the President of the United States, but at least as a member of the Cabinet, or a Congressman. The time would come of course when these admiring youngsters would learn that the halo which invested the circus performer was unreal, but, for

the time being, any one connected with the circus was a great, illustrious and envied personage.

One day Robert Rudd and Charlie Davis were standing outside the tent, near the lemonade stand, when a boy of sixteen or seventeen, clad in rustic attire and "with hayseed in his hair," approached them, and, though evidently somewhat awed by the idea that he was standing in the presence of two circus performers, ventured to ask:

"Do you two belong to the circus?"

"Yes," answered Robert.

"You bet we do," said Charlie, vivaciously. "The circus would have to shut up shop but for us."

Robert smiled, but the visitor didn't. He was too much in earnest.

"I seen you ridin' last evenin'," he said, next.

"Then you were at the performance?"

"Yes; I told dad I wanted to go, and he let me have the money I earned weedin' corn, tho' he said I better keep it to buy somethin' useful."

"I hope you enjoyed the evening," said Robert, courteously.

"It was splendid! I don't see how you fellows can ride so."

"It's all in the training."

"How long have you been a circus actor?" asked the young rustic.

"Five or six years; I began when I was very small."

"I began as soon as I could walk," said Charlie, who liked to romance a little when he had an opportunity.

"You don't say so?"

"Fact!" asserted Charlie.

"Did you ride on a hoss then?"

"No, I rode on a Newfoundland dog. When I got older I tried a pony. Now Rob and I are the champion boy-riders of Europe and America."

"Speak for yourself, Charlie," said Robert, smiling. "I don't make any such claims."

"Oh, well, don't be discouraged. You'll ride as well as I do some time."

"You flatter me," said Robert.

"I say, do you think there's any chance for me to learn the business?" asked the country boy, lowering his voice, in an anxious tone.

"What line do you want to take up?" asked Robert.

"Is there any line?" asked the boy, not understanding.

"I mean, do you want to be a rider, a clown, an acrobat, or what?"

"I'd like to ride like you two."

"I am afraid you are rather large to begin," said Robert, surveying the boy's large hands and feet, and his height, at least three inches greater than his own.

"Am I too big?" asked the boy, disappointed.

"No, you're not," said Charlie. "Why, I could teach you myself."

"I wish you would. I'd like goin' round with a circus better than working for dad on the farm. Do you fellows get paid big wages?"

"Of course we do," answered Charlie. "I get fifty dollars a week, board and travelling expenses."

"Fifty dollars a week!" gasped the country boy, expanding his eyes in astonishment.

"Yes, you see we're first-class performers."

"I couldn't get but a dollar and a half a week and board workin' on a farm," answered the country boy.

"What's your name?" asked Charlie, abruptly.

"Jotham Sprague."

"That wouldn't do for the stage ; you'd have to take a better name."

"I'd take any name ; fact is, I don't like Jotham myself."

"It isn't romantic enough," said Charlie. "The manager wouldn't have anybody of that name. It sounds too countrified."

"What sort of a name would do?" asked the boy.

"Lorenzo Leon would do pretty well."

"That's splendid!" said Jotham, admiringly.

"You see, it would look well on the bills. The famous bareback rider, Lorenzo Leon, who has just been imported from his native Italy at large expense, will perform some of his wonderful feats in the ring."

"I'd like that first rate," said Jotham, "only I ain't from Italy."

"No matter ; no one will know that. Now, if you want to come in and take a lesson I'll give you one."

"How much will you charge?" asked Jotham, eager but cautious.

"Oh, I won't charge you anything. I'll do it out of friendship. Come in, Rob."

"No, Charlie, not just now."

Robert suspected that Charlie meditated a practical joke, and did not care to take part in it.

They entered the tent—it was in the middle of the forenoon—and Charlie went to his friend the clown, and whispered a few words.

"So the young gentleman wants to take a lesson in riding, does he?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Jotham, eagerly, "if you have no objection."

"We'll do it for you as a favor," said the clown. "What's your name, young man?"

Jotham was about to answer correctly, when Charlie broke in—"His name is Lorenzo Leon, from Italy."

The clown grinned.

"A very fine name!" he answered. "Bring out the Andalusian steed."

An attendant led out the trick mule, which, meekly enough, walked round the ring.

"Can you ride that?" asked the clown.

"Oh, yes, I can ride a bigger hoss than that."

"Mount, then, and away!"

Charlie held the mule, which stood very quiet and demure, while the boy was getting on. But

no sooner was the boy on his back than he lifted his ears and dashed round the ring in such a lively way, making sudden turns and curves, that Jotham was soon clinging to him as pale as a sheet, with his arms closely clasped about the mule's neck, in momentary expectation of being thrown off. At this most critical point the clown shouted, "Now get up and stand on his back!"

Instead of doing this Jotham roared, "Stop him; take me off," in an extremity of terror.

At a signal the mule threw up his hind legs and the rider measured his length, more frightened than hurt, on the sawdust.

As he picked himself up Charlie came up to him.

"Have another lesson, Lorenzo!"

"I guess I'll go back to farmin'," answered Jotham, picking himself up and finding to his relief that none of his limbs were broken.

"Oh, nonsense! Try it again!"

"No, I guess not; I never would make a rider," and the boy left the tent completely cured of his wish to be a rider. He had received a rough but a wholesome lesson.

In the evening the performance began at the usual time. There was no change in the bill, and everything was expected to go on as usual.

In due time Robert came out for his equestrian act. In the course of it he had to jump through a hoop and over a banner. While he was doing this, suddenly a stone, as large as a base ball, hurled from the spectators' seats, struck the horse, and he swerved. The result was that Robert, instead of lighting on his back, fell to the ground in such a way that he turned his ankle, while the horse dashed by.

He was picked up, his face pale with the pain in his ankle, and was helped from the ring by some of the attendants.

"Shame! Shame! Lynch him!" rose from fifty indignant spectators. "Where's the man that threw the stone?"

But no one knew, except one. In one of the rear seats sat Carden, the discharged canvas man, smiling with malignant triumph at the mischief he had done.

"I said I'd be even with him," he muttered. "I hope he's badly hurt."

Among the spectators were Sidney Grey and

his father, Dr. Grey, a skilful physician. Both hurried to the ring.

"Are you much hurt, Robert?" asked Sidney, anxiously.

"I am in considerable pain, but I don't think I am seriously hurt," said Robert, attempting to smile.

"I will take the boy to my house," said Dr. Grey to the manager. "I am a physician, and I will see that he receives every attention."

"Thank you, doctor, I accept your offer gratefully," said Mr. Coleman. "I am attached to the boy, and I will bear all his expenses."

"There will be none, while he is at my house," said the doctor. "My son has taken a liking to young Rudd, and he will be a welcome guest."

When the performance was over, Carden left the tent stealthily. He had work to do that night. He bent his steps towards the house of Mr. Tarbox.

CHAPTER XX.

THE AMATEUR DETECTIVES.

WHEN it was found that Robert was not seriously hurt there was a general feeling of relief among his circus friends, for the boy rider was a great favorite. Though he was somewhat reserved he was always polite, affable, and ready to be of assistance to any of his associates. He was sometimes called "the little gentleman," and was generally supposed to have sprung from a good family, though even to himself his birth was a secret.

Among those who inquired anxiously for him were Charlie Davis and the Norwegian giant.

"He has sprained his ankle slightly," said Dr. Grey. "It will require a week or two of perfect rest, perhaps more. Indeed it will not do for him to ride again this season."

"Are you sure of that, doctor?" asked the manager.

"I am positive that it would be most imprudent."

"I asked because it cuts off the boy from earning money."

"There need be no trouble on that score. He can stay at my house as long as he likes, and it will cost him nothing."

"You are very kind, Dr. Grey. However, the boy is not without funds. I have two hundred dollars of his in my possession, and before I leave town I will hand it to him or you, as this accident will part us for the remainder of the season."

"Give it to him, then. I am glad he has been so provident."

Dr. Grey and Sidney obtained a carriage, and Robert was taken home to the doctor's comfortable and even luxurious dwelling, for, besides having had an extensive practice for years, he had married a lady with a fortune. Leaving Robert there in good hands, we return to the circus.

As soon as the entertainment was over, Charlie and Anak, remembering their engagement, bent their steps towards the house of Mr. Tarbox. They were detained, however, for fifteen minutes or more before being able to depart, and this gave Carden an opportunity to get at work.

"Have you seen Carden this evening, Charlie?" asked Anak.

"Yes; he was at the circus."

"I wonder whether it was he that threw the rock?" said Anak, suddenly.

"I shouldn't wonder. I didn't think of it before."

"He could have no other object in coming to the show. He had seen it plenty of times. Besides, his money must have been low."

"Perhaps he got in for nothing," suggested Charlie.

"Go and ask."

Charlie, upon inquiring at the ticket-office, found that Carden had tried to obtain a pass on the score of his former connection with the circus, but without success, as the manager had left orders that he was not to be admitted, except on the same footing with others.

"He grumbled some, but finally bought a ticket," added the ticket-seller. "I wondered at it, for there was nothing new to him."

"He must have been the one who fired the rock at poor Robert's horse—the villain!" said Anak, gravely. "We know he had a spite against the boy."

"I'd like to fire a rock at him!" said Charlie, impetuously.

"He may get into trouble yet," said Anak.
"Let us go along."

"Shall we go the house and speak to Mr. Tarbox?" asked Charlie.

"Yes, for he will know where to look for him."

"I wonder what he will say when he sees you? Bet he'll be scared."

"We'll soon let him understand that we came for his good."

Mr. Tarbox was just about retiring, or rather he was making the usual preparations—bringing in kindling wood from the shed, raking out the fire, etc.—when a knock was heard at the outer door.

In the Tarbox household such a thing as a visitor at half-past 10 o'clock in the evening was absolutely unknown.

"Who can it be, Nathan?" asked Mrs. Tarbox, in a flutter.

"How do I know?" returned her husband in the usual polite tone in which he was accustomed to address his wife.

"Suppose it should be burglars?" suggested Mrs. Tarbox, nervously.

"They'd be very likely to knock at the door, wouldn't they, you goose!" said her husband. "That's exactly what they always do, isn't it?"

The knock was repeated.

"Go to the door, Mrs. Tarbox."

"Oh mercy, Nathan, I couldn't. I might be killed."

"Give me the lamp, then, you fool!"

Mrs. Tarbox readily gave her husband the lamp, and he strode to the door.

When he opened it, and his inquiring glance fell on the towering form of Anak, it must be admitted that Mr. Tarbox himself felt nervous. He made a movement to close the door, but Anak thrust in his huge foot, and this made the effort impossible.

"What do you want?" demanded Tarbox, his calmness not quite undisturbed.

"We come on important business," said Anak, in his deep voice.

"Then you might have come at a better time," said Tarbox, his fears dissipated and his ill-temper returning. "It is time all honest persons were abed."

"So it is, Mr. Tarbox," answered Anak, "but I

am afraid there is one dishonest person that is wide awake."

"What do you mean?" demanded Tarbox, with a vague suspicion that the remark might be made at his expense.

"Is there anything of value concealed under the barn yonder?" asked Anak, pointing to the one already referred to in a former chapter.

"Why do you ask?" queried the farmer, turning pale, and eying the questioner with suspicion.

"Because a man who has been discharged from our show—a canvas man, named Carden—was seen by Charlie here prowling about the barn this afternoon, and trying to look under it through a crack."

Now Tarbox turned pale in earnest.

"It must have been when I was there," he said.

"Very likely; were you under it?"

"Ye-es," answered the farmer.

"Then he was watching you. You know best whether he was likely to see anything that could be of service to him."

"Is he there now?" asked Tarbox, agitated.

"I should not be at all surprised."

"He may be robbing me at this moment," said Tarbox, wildly.

"Then there is something hidden under the barn?"

"Ye-es. What shall I do? Is he armed? Is he a strong man?"

"No matter whether he is or not. I'm middling strong myself," said the giant, with a laugh. "Get your hat, and I'll go with you, and we'll see if we can't defeat him and his plans."

"I'll go, too," added Charlie, in an important tone.

"You alone are able to frighten him, Charlie," said Anak, aroused.

Tarbox got his hat and led the way hurriedly towards the barn. Before they reached there a sudden suspicion entered his mind and he stopped short.

"How do I know but this is a trick?" he said, nervously. "You may be intending to rob me yourself."

"Make your mind easy, Mr. Tarbox!" said Anak. "We don't do business in that way."

"You are my enemy," said Tarbox.

"Not at all. You have done me no harm. You

were meaning to arrest me, to be sure, but you didn't, and I have no hard feelings against you. I will do you a good turn if you will let me, especially as this Carden is a bad fellow. He tried to kill Robert Rudd, to-night."

"What, the boy rider?"

"Yes. Robert caught him stealing, or trying to steal, from his locker, and this led to his discharge. He threw a rock at the boy's horse, and he was thrown."

At another time Tarbox might possibly have felt rejoiced that the boy against whom he himself felt a spite had met with an accident, but now he felt too anxious about his own property to concern himself about other matters.

By this time they had reached the solitary barn.

Charlie got down on his knees and peered through the same crevice which Carden had used in the afternoon.

"He's there!" he exclaimed in excitement, "and he's got a lighted candle."

"What is he doing?" asked Tarbox in agitation.

"He's digging."

“He will steal my money!” ejaculated Tarbox in dismay. “There’s between three and four hundred dollars hidden there.”

“Rather a queer savings bank, Mr. Tarbox!” said Anak, dryly.

CHAPTER XXI.

CATCHING A BURGLAR.

CARDEN had not the least suspicion that he was observed. The Tarbox farm-house stood rather aloof from the village, and the barn, as we have already stated, was at some distance from the house. He worked away calmly, feeling that there was no danger of his being interfered with.

At last he reached the box, and stooping lifted it complacently.

Mr. Tarbox became very much agitated when he saw his hoard in the possession of the burglar.

"Can't we get at him?" he asked of Anak in an agitated whisper.

"No," whispered Anak. "Our best plan is to wait for him, and seize him as he leaves the barn."

"But he will have my money."

"Of course he will. We will catch him with the stolen property in his possession."

"But it isn't safe for him to have it."

"It won't be safe for him, I'm thinking," said Anak, dryly. "Don't you see if we reveal ourselves now he will blow out the candle and remain where he is, and we can't catch him in the dark. Ten to one he'll get off with the money."

Tarbox saw that the giant was right. In spite of his agitation, he couldn't help remarking that Anak spoke English with remarkable ease—for a Norwegian, and he said so.

Anak laughed.

"Oh well," he said, "it's a good while since I was in Norway."

"Don't speak so loud, you two," said Charlie Davis, whose eye was glued to the crevice. "He'll hear you."

"The boy is right," said Anak.

"Is he coming this way yet?" asked Tarbox, eagerly.

"Not yet; he is sitting down, counting the money."

Tarbox groaned.

"I—I'd like to choke him—the thief!" he muttered.

"Can't you find a better savings bank, friend Tarbox?" said Anak.

"I'm afraid of savings banks. They break sometimes," answered the farmer.

"At any rate the money would be safer there than here, and you would get interest for it besides. But for us, or rather for Charlie here, who watched that rascal this afternoon, you'd have had to bid a long good-by to your money."

"He's got through counting it," said Charlie, who was still watching, "and he's putting it in his pocket."

"I shall never see it again!" murmured Tarbox, sadly.

"Oh, yes you will—we've got the man as secure as a rat in a rat-trap. He'll have to come out this way, won't he?"

"Yes, he'll have to come up through the trap-door."

"If he hadn't the money, it would be well to fasten down the trap-door, and keep him locked up there for the night. As it is, we shall have to secure him, and carry him to the station-house ourselves."

"We might put him back under the barn after we've taken the money from him," suggested Charlie Davis.

"He may have matches with him," said Anak, "and in that case he might set the barn on fire out of revenge. He's an ugly customer, that Carden, and is capable of anything."

"No, no, let him go!" said Tarbox, alarmed at the suggestion of losing his barn by fire. "Take the money from him and send him off."

"No, no; we won't let him off so easy," said Anak. "There's another matter we must inquire into. We must find out whether he is the man that threw the rock at Robert's horse to-night. If so, he must be punished for that."

Meanwhile, and this conversation took a much briefer time than may be imagined, Carden had ascended the ladder, emerged through the trap-door, which he had left open when he went down, and, with his ill-gotten booty stowed away in his pockets, had reached the small door by which he entered. He came out quite unconscious of danger, when he felt a strong hand at his collar, and his startled look fell upon the giant and his two companions.

"What's all this?" he asked, in affected bravado. "Let go of me, Anak."

"You villain!" exclaimed the farmer, furiously; "give me back my money."

“Your money, old potato digger!” returned Carden. “Who’s got your money?”

“You have.”

“It’s a lie. How could I get hold of your money?”

“What have you been doing in the barn?” asked Anak.

“Lying down on the hay, if you must know,” returned Carden. “I got turned out of my boarding-place because I couldn’t pay my board, and I thought Old Turnip-Top here wouldn’t mind my getting a free bed lying on his hay.”

“That’s a lie,” said Tarbox, in excitement; “you’ve got my money in your pocket—three or four hundred dollars.”

“Where did I get hold of it? Do you keep money in your barn?” sneered the canvas man.

“Carden, it’s no use pretending ignorance; you found out that our friend here had money concealed under the barn floor—Charlie saw you spying this afternoon—and you thought to-night would be a good chance to secure it.”

“So that boy blabbed about me, did he?” said Carden, with an evil glance at Charlie. “He’d best look out, or I’ll serve him as I did—”

Here he stopped short ; but Charlie finished his sentence for him.

“ As you did Rob to-night,” he added ; “ that’s what you mean.”

“ I don’t know what you mean,” said the canvas man, finding he had said too much.

“ You know well enough !” said Anak, sternly, for he liked Robert, and was incensed against the man who had tried to do him such grievous harm. “ You know well enough what the boy means ; you were seen in the tent this evening, and it was you who threw the rock at Robert Rudd’s horse.”

“ You can’t prove it, and it’s a lie !” said Carden, defiantly.

“ Make him give up the money,” said the farmer, impatiently, for he cared nothing for Carden’s attempt to injure our hero.

“ I’ll give it up if you’ll let me go,” said the canvas man.

“ You’re not in a position to make terms,” said Anak. “ We promise nothing.”

“ Then you won’t get it,” he returned, doggedly.

“ We won’t, eh ?”

Anak, for he was the speaker, threw him down,

and held his hands and feet as in a vise, while Tarbox, at his invitation, thrust his hands into the thief's pocket and drew out the gold and silver coins by handfuls.

Carden ground his teeth, but he felt that resistance was vain. He was a strong man, but Anak had the strength of three ordinary men, and he was disposed to exert his strength to the utmost on this occasion, not only because he was opposed to dishonesty, but because he had in his grasp the man who had assaulted Robert.

"Have you got it all, Mr. Tarbox?" asked Anak.

"Wait and I will count it," answered the farmer.

"Some of the money was mine," growled Carden.

"Was it? How much?"

"Ten dollars," answered the canvas man, after a moment's thought.

"That's too thin, Carden, and doesn't tally with your first story. You said you laid down on the hay in the barn because you had no money and were turned out of your boarding-house."

"Oh, you're too smart," muttered the baffled thief.

"I think we shall prove too smart for you to-night. Well, Mr. Tarbox, how about the money?"

"It's twenty-five cents short," said Tarbox, disturbed.

"Oh, well, if you have come as near it as that you are lucky. Now let us be going."

"But I don't want to leave it here; some one may find it."

"You would be ruined if you didn't find it," said Anak, contemptuously.

"Will you let me up now?" asked Carden.

"Yes, I will let you up, but I won't let you go."

"Then I will lie here."

"If you can."

Despite his resistance Anak lifted him on his shoulders and bore him off as easily as an ordinary man would carry a boy three years old.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked the canvas man.

"Deliver you over to the authorities," answered Anak; and this he did, despite the alternate prayers and menaces of his captive.

My young readers will be pleased to hear that Carden passed the night in the station-house and

was arraigned for trial the next day before the court, which was then in session.

"I'm much obleeged to you," Tarbox had the grace to say as they parted.

"And you won't have me arrested for trespass and assault, Mr. Tarbox?" said Anak, laughing.

"No; you've done me a good service to-night."

"Take my advice and put your money in the bank to-morrow," said Anak.

Tarbox did so; not only the money which had so narrowly escaped being stolen, but his other hoards were collected and carried to the nearest savings bank, which was undoubtedly a wise act on the part of the farmer.

CHAPTER XXII.

ROBERT RUDD LEAVES THE CIRCUS.

A WEEK passed, and Robert Rudd was still the guest of Dr. Grey. The circus had left town, and so the boy-rider was separated from his professional companions. Though he was not as much attached to circus life as some, it was his means of making a livelihood, and had been for some years, and yielded him a considerably larger income than a boy of his age was likely to earn in any other way. Now, it imparts a pleasant feeling of independence to earn one's living, and the pleasure is heightened when not only a living is earned, but there is a chance to lay up money besides.

When Robert was apprised of the approaching departure of the circus he went to Dr. Grey.

"Dr. Grey," he said, "don't you think it will be safe for me to go back to the circus?"

"Yes; it will be safe to go back to it, but not to ride."

"How soon can I ride, do you think?"

"Your ankle will be weak for some time to come; not too weak for ordinary exercise, but not strong enough for bareback riding."

"In that case," said Robert, with some feeling of disappointment, "there would be no advantage in going back this season. I suppose I could ride next season."

"Undoubtedly, if you desire it," said the doctor, pointedly.

"Do you intend to travel with the circus when you are a man?" asked Sidney.

"Not if I can find some other employment at which I can make a fair living," answered Robert. "I don't care much for it, but at present it pays me better than anything else."

"That is not the most important consideration, my lad," said the doctor.

"No; but at present I cannot afford to leave it."

"Why can't you stay with me all winter?" asked Sidney, eagerly. "I should like your company very much."

"Thank you, Sidney; you are a true friend."

"I second my boy's invitation," said the doctor, cordially.

"Thank you, also," said Robert, gratefully. "I feel your kindness the more because I have no claims upon you."

"Then you will stay?" said Sidney, eagerly.

"What would Ronald Percy say if you adopted me as a companion?" asked Robert, with a smile.

"I don't care what. I would ten times rather have you for a friend than he."

"Thank you, Sidney. You are not prejudiced against me because I am a circus boy."

"Why should I be? If you were rough and coarse, I shouldn't fancy you, whether you were a circus boy or not, but I consider you much more of a gentleman than Ronald Percy," said Sidney, warmly.

"I appreciate your good opinion, Sidney, but as to remaining here all winter, though I should enjoy it on many accounts, I would not like to be dependent even upon so good friends while I am able to earn my own living. If there were anything your father had for me to do it would make a difference."

"I must see if I can think of anything," said Dr. Grey. "I am afraid I couldn't delegate any of my medical duties to you. I fear my patients

would not repose confidence in so young a doctor."

So the circus kept on its way, and Robert remained for a time at the house of the physician. Those who know the characteristics of society in a country village will not be surprised to learn that the introduction of a circus boy into his family led many to wonder at and criticise Dr. Grey. Prominent among the critics was Ronald Percy and his family.

"Really," said Mrs. Percy, a shallow woman, who made large pretensions to fashion and position, "I can't understand what Dr. Grey can be thinking of, to admit a low circus boy into his house. We don't know what associates the boy has had in the past, but he must be coarse and ill-bred, and surely he is not a fit companion for Sidney Grey. I hope my Ronald won't get intimate with him."

"You may be sure I won't, ma," said Ronald. "I wouldn't demean myself by taking notice of him. When Sidney wanted to invite him to join in our games I opposed it."

"You, Ronald, can always be relied upon to feel like a gentleman," said his mother, com-

placently. "Thank heaven! he hasn't any liking for low company."

"I am told the boy is very gentlemanly," said Mrs. Frost, a woman very different from Mrs. Percy.

Mrs. Percy shrugged her shoulders.

"That is absurd, of course," she answered. "Gentlemanly behavior isn't picked up in circuses. I told the doctor so, but he is very eccentric, and he wouldn't listen to anything against his new favorite."

"That must be rather awkward for you, as Ronald and Sidney are so much together."

"I have requested Ronald not to go to the doctor's so much while that boy is staying there. I feel that it is due to our position not to allow him to form such intimacies."

Nevertheless, when Sidney Grey got up a little party in honor of his guest, and invited Ronald among others, the young aristocrat did not decline, but presented himself promptly, notwithstanding his mother's objection to the company of the young circus rider.

Among the twenty boys and girls who assembled in the drawing-room of Dr. Grey there was not

one more quiet in manner or gentlemanly in bearing than Robert Rudd.

"I wonder where the boy has picked up his high-bred manner?" thought the doctor. "It must be natural to him."

This was the case. Robert had not been placed in circumstances favorable to the formation of a polished manner, but it was innate and instinctive.

At a pause during the evening Sidney said, "Robert, can't you do something to entertain the company?"

"Would you like to see a little juggling?" asked Robert.

"Oh, yes!" cried several. Even Ronald Percy looked interested. Still he could not help sneering a little.

"Did you do that at the circus?" he asked.

"No," answered Robert, quietly. "I am not a professional magician, but we had a professor of magic with us at one time, who took the trouble to show me a few simple tricks, and these I am ready to perform at the request of Sidney."

"You couldn't please me or the company better," said Sidney, eagerly.

"I shall have to ask you for a few articles," said Robert.

"Anything in the house is at your service, Rob."

So for half an hour Robert amused the company with a few tricks, which he did exceedingly well, for it was a characteristic of our young hero to be thorough in all he did. It is unnecessary to enumerate his tricks, or to describe the interest which the young company manifested. It is enough to say that when he had finished he had established himself in the good graces of every one present except Ronald, who, though as much interested as the rest, was unwilling to admit it.

"We are very much obliged to you, Robert," said Sidney, warmly. "You are a capital magician."

"I would advise you to go into that business," said Ronald, with his usual sneer. "I am told it pays very well, and it isn't as low as the circus."

"I shall confine myself to performing for the gratification of my friends," said Robert, coolly, ignoring the impertinence of Ronald.

"Can't you do anything more for us, Robert?" asked Sidney. "Do you sing?"

"A little," was the unexpected reply; "that is, I can sing some of the popular melodies."

"Pray do."

"If any one will play the accompaniment."

A young girl was found to do this, and Robert sang in a clear, musical voice several popular favorites, which appeared to please no less than his magical efforts.

"Really, Robert," said Mrs. Grey, "you are remarkably well fitted to please a company of young people. We are very much obliged to you."

"I am glad to have it in my power to do something in return for your kindness, Mrs. Grey."

"The boy may belong to the circus," thought Mrs. Grey, "but I should be glad if my son were as accomplished, while I could not desire him to be any more refined."

Ronald was secretly surprised, and not over well pleased at Robert's popularity. He found himself in a minority of one in his sneering attempts to decry him.

At the end of a week, when Robert was beginning to consider seriously what employment he should follow in place of the one he had been compelled to abandon, he received a letter through the mail which equally surprised and pleased him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT THE LETTER CONTAINED.

THE letter, which was directed in a bold hand to Robert Rudd, care of Dr. Grey, ran thus :

“ROBERT RUDD: I understand that you have left the circus on account of the accident you met with recently, and I presume that you have not yet found anything else to do. I chanced to be at Crampton and saw you perform, and was favorably impressed by your appearance. I am about to make a journey to the West, and need the services of a boy or young man to assist me in writing and serve me in other ways, and I feel disposed to employ you, if you would like to accept the engagement. I cannot offer you as high pay as you probably received at the circus, but am ready to pay your travelling expenses and pay you five dollars per week.

“Be kind enough to let me know at once whether you will accept my offer, or rather, if you are favorably disposed, come at once to New York and call upon me at the St. Nicholas Hotel. You

will find me in room No. 35. I would suggest that the sooner you can come to me the better.

“Yours truly,

“JOHN FITZGERALD.”

Robert read this letter with mingled surprise and gratification. It was pleasant to think he would soon be employed and earning his own livelihood, and he could have thought of no engagement more likely to suit him.

“What is your letter about, Robert?” asked Sidney.

“Read it for yourself, Sidney,” said Robert, passing it to him. “What do you think of it?” he asked, later.

“I think it is a splendid chance. I wouldn’t mind having such an offer myself.”

“I think I am in luck,” said Robert, complacently.

“Then you mean to accept it?”

“Certainly; I should be very foolish if I did not. I have been wondering what I could get to do, and this comes just in the nick of time.”

“I am almost sorry the offer has come to you, Robert. I had been expecting you would stay with me a considerable time.”

"I should be sure to enjoy it if I was willing to be idle, but I have an independent spirit, and I prefer to earn my own living. I will come back and visit you some time if you will let me."

"Let you! I shall quarrel with you if you don't. Perhaps, however, you would prefer to visit Ronald Percy."

"I will wait at any rate till I receive an invitation," answered Robert, smiling, for he did not feel in the least sensitive about the malicious contempt which Ronald professed to feel for him."

"When will you start, Robert?"

"To-morrow morning. Mr. Fitzgerald seems to be in a hurry, and there is no good reason for delay. My foot is well enough for all ordinary use, though it would give out if I should attempt riding."

When Dr. Grey was shown the letter Robert had received, he looked puzzled.

"Certainly the chance seems to be a good one," he said, "and doubtless it will be well to accept it. It is certainly a remarkable piece of luck."

"So I consider it," said Robert.

"I mean, that it is like the events in a story that you should have such a chance offer from an

absolute stranger, just as you stand in need of it. I should like to see this Mr. Fitzgerald," he continued, thoughtfully.

"I think I heard that there was a man of that name staying at the hotel about a week since," said Sidney.

"He says he was present when Robert met with his accident."

"Then it is probably the same one. Then you have decided to accept, my boy?"

"Yes, sir; I shall go to New York to-morrow."

"It may be as well. But one thing I want to say: if the engagement doesn't prove satisfactory, or you are ever again thrown upon your own resources, come back to us and you will have a cordial welcome."

"Yes, Rob, you may be sure of that," said Sidney, eagerly.

"You are both very kind to me," returned Robert, gratefully, "and I will take you at your word. By the way, Dr. Grey, I want to ask you a favor."

"It is granted as soon as asked, my boy."

"It is only to keep the two hundred dollars I have saved up for the present. It will be safer in

your hands than mine, and I shan't need it, as all my expenses are to be paid by my new employer, and five dollars a week besides."

"I will keep it for you if you desire."

"Thank you; if I had it I might have it stolen from me, and besides it would make me uncomfortable to feel that I had so much money about me."

"I see you are prudent. I have one good reason for keeping it, as you will one day come back and reclaim it."

The next morning Robert started for New York.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ROBERT MEETS HIS EMPLOYER.

ROBERT RUDD had been in New York more than once, and he therefore had no difficulty in finding out the fine hotel on Broadway known as the St. Nicholas.

He entered it, and, walking up to the desk, inquired, "Is Mr. John Fitzgerald staying here?"

"Yes," answered the clerk. "Do you wish to see him?"

"If you please."

"Then write your name on a card and I will send it up."

Robert did so.

"See if No. 135 is in," said the clerk, calling a hall boy, and handing him the card.

In five minutes the hall boy came back, saying: "Mr. Fitzgerald wants the young gentleman to come up."

Robert followed him to a room on the third floor and knocked at the door.

"Come in," was heard from the interior.

On entering Robert looked with some curiosity at the solitary occupant of the room, who was to be his future employer. He saw a tall, dark-complexioned man neatly dressed in a suit which appeared to be new, since it had not lost its first gloss.

Fitzgerald, for it was he, rose promptly, and advanced to meet Robert with an air of great cordiality.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Rudd," he said, extending his hand. "You were perhaps surprised to receive my letter."

"I was still more pleased," answered Robert, politely.

"I am glad to hear it, since it gives me the assurance that you regard my offer favorably."

"Yes sir, I could not well do otherwise. It is of a tempting character. I am only surprised that you should make me such an offer, knowing so little of me."

"Perhaps I know more of you than you imagine," said Fitzgerald to himself, with a peculiar look which, however, Robert did not notice.

"I judge of persons quickly!" he said aloud,

"and when first I saw you in the ring it occurred to me that you were just the young person I should like to have travel with me. Of course, I didn't dream then that there was any possibility of my securing you, for I was not prepared to pay a sum as large as you were doubtless paid at the circus. However, when you were injured by the dastardly trick of some scoundrel, and I subsequently learned that you would be unable to ride for the remainder of the season, it occurred to me that perhaps you would accept my proposal."

"I am very glad to do so, and I am very much obliged to you for giving me such a chance. Do you think I can fulfil the duties of the post?"

"Oh, I should think so. Favor me by writing a line or two from this newspaper. I wish to judge of your handwriting."

There were writing materials on the table, and Robert complied with the request.

Though not a handsome writer, he wrote a plain and legible hand, and with considerable readiness.

Fitzgerald scanned it hastily, and said, "Oh, that will suit me very well."

“Do you think I shall be competent to do all you desire?”

“I feel sure of it. You have travelled considerably, I presume?”

“Yes, with the circus.”

“Precisely. Then you know something about hotels, trains, etc. A boy who had always lived at home would not suit me so well. Where is your luggage?”

“I have only a gripsack—I mean valise—with me.”

“That is better. Travellers should not be encumbered with too much baggage. It is a great nuisance. Where is it?”

“I left it below.”

“You can bring it up to my room. I won’t hire a room for you, for I intend to start this very night for the West by a night train from the Grand Central depot. That won’t be too sudden for you, will it?”

“O no, sir; I am entirely at your service. I have nothing to detain me in New York.”

“Go down and get your valise and bring it up here, and I will give you my instructions.”

“The boy has walked into the trap,” said Fitz-

gerald, thoughtfully, when Robert left him. "He is a fine boy, and seems a thorough little gentleman in spite of the way in which he has been brought up. It is a pity to harm him, but my interests and that scoundrel Hugo's require it."

CHAPTER XXV.

AT NIAGARA FALLS.

ROBERT and his new employer started the same morning on their western trip. From the first Robert was haunted by the thought that he had seen Fitzgerald somewhere before. The man's features looked familiar to him, but he had no associations, or could recall none, connected with him. Fitzgerald, however, who remembered very well his past connection with the boy, was afraid that he would succeed in remembering him, and grew uneasy when he saw Robert's bright, expressive eyes fixed upon him.

"You seem interested in my appearance," he said, dryly.

Robert answered quickly: "I beg your pardon, Mr. Fitzgerald, for staring at you. Somehow your features looked familiar to me, and I was trying to think whether I had ever met you before."

"Very possibly you may have seen me, for I have been something of a traveller," answered his employer; "but we never knew each other. I should have remembered you."

"Very like I may have seen you at some place where we gave an entertainment," said Robert.

"I was at Crampton, you know."

"I mean longer ago than that. I have a queer feeling as if some time you were connected with me in some way," said Robert, thoughtfully.

Fitzgerald was secretly uneasy. If Robert's recollections should become clearer, and he should come to suspect the truth, then good-by to his plans, for the boy would of course be on his guard. His ingenuity came to his aid.

"It is more likely," he said, in an apparently indifferent tone, "that I resemble some such person. The fact is," he added with a forced laugh, "I once came near falling a victim to my unfortunate resemblance to a rascal. I was arrested on suspicion of being a forger or something of the sort, because I looked like the real culprit. Of course the truth came out, but not until I had been subjected to some inconvenience."

This explanation seemed satisfactory to Robert,

who gave up his scrutiny of his employer, convinced that he had been deluded by a fancied or real resemblance.

They made a day's stop at Buffalo, and went from there to Niagara Falls, which Robert had never before seen. He naturally derived a rare enjoyment from the sight of the great cataract. He was hurried away from the falls by Fitzgerald in consequence of a conversation which the boy had with a stranger, which grievously alarmed his employer.

This is how it happened :

Robert and Fitzgerald were on Goat Island. Our hero was looking earnestly at the mighty cataract, and did not observe that a stranger was looking earnestly at him. Fitzgerald had strayed to a little distance, and was not within ear-shot.

Robert was roused from his revery by a tap upon the shoulder.

Turning he saw a man of forty-five, well dressed, and apparently a man of position.

"Did you wish to speak to me, sir?" he inquired.

"Yes," answered the stranger. "You will, perhaps, think me curious if I ask your name?"

"My name is Robert Rudd."

Robert thought it probable that the stranger had seen him riding somewhere, and recognized him from this, though he could not call him by name. But the name seemed to tell the inquirer nothing. On the contrary, he appeared to be disappointed.

“I suppose I am mistaken, then,” he said, apologetically; “but I can only say in apology for my curiosity, that you bear a remarkable resemblance to an old school-mate of mine.”

“Who was he?” asked Robert, eagerly.

It must be borne in mind that the boy knew nothing of his own family, and earnestly desired, though he never expected, to solve the mystery of his birth.

“His name was Julian Richmond. Are you, by chance, related to him?”

“Not that I know of,” answered Robert, soberly. “Would you mind telling me something about him?”

Rather wondering at our hero's curiosity in regard to a man of whom he had never before heard, the stranger answered, “Certainly, if you would like to hear. Julian and I were school-fellows together in Albany, where I live now. His father,

old Cornelius Richmond, was a rich man. I believe he is still living on a fine estate along the Hudson. When we grew up the Richmonds moved away and I lost sight of them. I heard, however, that Julian went out West and married. A coldness sprang up between him and his father, for what reason I don't know. I don't know whether they were ever reconciled. At any rate, poor Julian died, as I some time after heard, leaving his father childless. If you were Julian's son you could not look more like him."

Robert listened to this communication with intense interest. Could it be that this Julian Richmond was his father? It was the first clew of any kind that he had ever found, and he repeated over to himself the names of Julian and Cornelius Richmond, determined to remember them, and some time to make further inquiries.

Meanwhile Fitzgerald, turning, noticed that Robert was conversing with a stranger. Though he was far from suspecting that an important secret has been revealed to the boy, he was naturally of a cautious temperament, and he thought it imprudent to allow Robert to become intimate with any one, lest possibly when he disappeared he

might be suspected of having had some agency in the affair. He therefore walked up rapidly to where the two were conversing.

"Robert," he called, when two rods distant.

Robert obeyed the summons.

"I think we will go back to the hotel. I have something to do before leaving Niagara, and there is not much time."

"O, Mr. Fitzgerald," said Robert, eagerly, "that gentleman tells me I look very much like an old school-mate of his."

Fitzgerald was instantly alarmed. He knew, for Hugo had told him, that the boy bore a wonderful resemblance to his dead father, and, of course, that father must have old friends and acquaintances who would see the resemblance and possibly betray it to the boy.

"Is there anything so remarkable in that?" he asked. "Probably there are hundreds of people whom you resemble."

"But he said I looked as if I might be this man's son," continued Robert.

"Did he mention the name of this old school-mate?" inquired Fitzgerald, alarmed.

"Yes; he said his name was Julian Richmond."

If Robert had been watching the countenance of his employer he would have seen a sudden look of dismay which might have roused his suspicions, but he was taking a last look at the great cataract.

"Very likely!" said Fitzgerald, after a slight pause. "I have been told plenty of times that I looked like this one and that one."

"But you know your family, and I do not. I have no knowledge of who my father was, and so I hoped that I might hear something that would reveal it to me. May I ask the gentleman his name? I might like to—

"No," answered Fitzgerald, with an abrupt harshness that made Robert survey him in astonishment. "You are too old to be so childish. I have no time to lose. Come at once with me to the hotel."

"It wouldn't take a minute."

"Do you hear what I say?" said his employer, angrily.

Robert was too proud to make any further request. He was puzzled at the extraordinary manner of Fitzgerald, for which there seemed no occasion. It was the first time that his new employer had spoken to him harshly, and he was un-

able to account for it. He did not press the request, being unwilling to subject himself to any further rudeness. Had he known how important that inquiry was, he would have made it at all hazards. As it was, his curiosity had been excited, but he had no suspicion that he was already on the threshold of the secret which had always been withheld from him.

Robert was proud, and his proud spirit rebelled against his employer's rudeness; but he was not in a position to break with him. He had taken no money with him, and was of course dependent upon Fitzgerald. He was hundreds of miles away from his good friends the Greys, and it was the part of prudence not to manifest the resentment he felt. If he had had in his pocket the two hundred dollars which belonged to him he might have acted differently. As it was, he preserved a dignified silence.

Fitzgerald, on arriving at the hotel, made arrangements to leave at once. When they were fairly on their way he changed his manner, became conciliatory and affable, and apparently endeavored to make Robert forget his harsh words.

“I suppose he spoke hastily,” thought Robert. “He could not know how important it seemed to me to make any inquiries about my family. At any rate, I know the gentleman lives in Albany, and some day I will hunt him up.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

A VICTIM OF TREACHERY.

ARRIVED in Chicago, Fitzgerald put up at the Sherman House, and of course Robert accompanied him.

Our hero was a little puzzled to understand why he had been engaged. Little or nothing was given him to do. Once or twice he had been employed to buy tickets, or go on small errands, but his office seemed to be a sinecure. This would have suited many boys, but Robert was a boy of active temperament, and felt happier to be employed. I may remark here that, in general, nothing is worse for a boy than to be absolutely unemployed, for it is as true as the old proverb expresses itself, that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

One day Robert ventured to remark to his employer, "I am afraid, Mr. Fitzgerald, I am not earning my wages ; I am quite ready to do more."

"That isn't your fault, Robert," said Fitzgerald. "It is true, while we are travelling I don't find much to do; but when we get to our destination I shall keep you more busy."

"I am glad of that," said Robert, "for I feel better to be employed."

"I believe I have never said anything about the object of my journey," Fitzgerald continued.

"No, sir."

"I am employed by certain New York parties to look after land and mining investments at the West. I shall have to visit several places, and there will be more or less writing to do, in which I shall employ you. By the way" (they were now in the hotel at Chicago), "I will dictate a letter to you now."

"Very well, sir."

Robert took out writing materials and Fitzgerald dictated the following:

"Ashley Robinson, Esq., 549 Broadway, New York:

"DEAR SIR: I am not quite sure as to the tenor of my instructions from you. Do I understand that I am empowered to sell your land without further communication with you, or do you wish me to

apprise you of any offer I may receive? My own impression is that you ought not to accept less than \$5000 for it, as it is sure to increase in value. Please write me at once.

“Yours truly,

“JOHN FITZGERALD.”

“It is done,” said Robert.

“You may go out and mail it. I should prefer that you would take it to the post-office yourself, as it will go quicker than if you mailed it in the hotel, or put it in one of the street boxes. Any one will tell you where the post-office is.”

Robert went out, well pleased to have something to do, and mailed the letter at the city post-office, as directed.

Fitzgerald laughed to himself after the boy went out.

“The boy little suspects that that is a bogus letter, and that there is no such person as Ashley Robinson in New York. If there is, I haven’t the honor of knowing him. It was rather a happy idea of mine, as the boy’s suspicion will not be so easily aroused if he thinks I am engaged in a legitimate business journey. Well, well, I shall be glad when the job is accomplished, for it isn’t

overmuch to my taste. That villain Hugo might find it to his mind. It is a pity that such fellows should succeed in feathering their nests and getting all the good things of this life. When this work is done, I shall have a hold upon him, and it won't be my fault if I don't make him pay handsomely for doing his dirty work for him."

Presently Robert returned.

"Did you mail the letter?" asked his employer.

"Yes, sir."

"That is well, for it was an important one."

"You forgot to tell your correspondent where to write you," said Robert, to whom the omission had occurred as he was returning.

Fitzgerald was for a moment embarrassed, but he was a man of ready wit.

"Oh, he will know," he answered; "he will address me at the town where his land is located."

This seemed a plausible explanation, and Robert said no more.

They walked to the railroad station with their valises in hand.

On the way rather a rough-looking man accosted Fitzgerald.

“Why, Fitz, old fellow, how did you drop down here?”

Fitzgerald flushed, and answered hurriedly—

“I came by cars from New York.”

“I don’t mean that. What’s your lay, and who have you got with you?”

“Excuse me, Brandon, I am in a hurry,” Fitzgerald answered, uncomfortably.

Brandon whistled.

“Something mysterious, eh?” he said.

“Not at all, but you must excuse me.”

It seemed peculiar to Robert, who had seen considerable of the world, that a reputable business man should be addressed in the terms employed by Brandon, and he looked his surprise.

“That man is an acquaintance I stumbled across in one of my business journeys,” explained Fitzgerald when they passed on, “and he assumed undue familiarity. A man stumbles across some strange acquaintances; I prefer to steer clear of such parties, but it is sometimes hard to shake them off.”

“He seemed very well acquainted,” thought Robert, but he said nothing. In fact he was considerably at a loss what to think of his employer,

who chose to say very little of his past history. He felt that he should not care to remain long with him, but for the present there seemed no objection to fill up the remainder of the season in his employ.

From Chicago Robert and his employer travelled northwest, till they entered the State of Minnesota. Here, somewhat to Robert's surprise, they left the cars at a small town, which I will call Florence, and registered at a small hotel, which I will call the Dearborn House. Probably our hero looked surprised, and Fitzgerald volunteered an explanation.

"It is here where Mr. Robertson's land is located," he said.

"I thought it was Mr. Robinson—Ashley Robinson," said Robert.

"To be sure," returned Fitzgerald, rather disconcerted, for he had forgotten the name he had extemporized in Chicago; "I am always making mistakes about names. I have to enter everything in my diary."

The morning after, Robert chanced to pick up a piece of paper just outside his employer's door. As there seemed to be writing upon it he picked

it up, thinking that it might be of some importance.

On the scrap of paper there was a name which immediately arrested Robert's interest—the name of Hugo Richmond.

"Richmond," repeated Robert, in surprise. "Why, that is the name of the man I was said so strongly to resemble. Is it possible that Mr. Fitzgerald knows him?"

Then he bethought himself that Richmond was not an uncommon name and there was no necessary connection between Hugo Richmond and the Julian Richmond whom he resembled. Still the discovery of this paper made him thoughtful. He would have liked to question his employer, but felt instinctively aware that it would do no good. Besides, from the manner in which he had found the paper, it would seem as if he were trying to spy out his master's affairs.

"Robert," said Fitzgerald, after breakfast, "let us go out and take a walk."

"With pleasure," answered the boy, politely.

"I am going out to take a look at Mr. Robinson's land," said Fitzgerald.

"Has he much?"

"Oh, yes ; he owns a quarter section, which he took up some years since at the government's price—a dollar and a quarter an acre. It must be worth a good deal more now."

"I suppose he wants to sell?"

"Yes. He lives so far away that he can't well look after it. Besides, by selling now he can make a large profit."

"Do you think you can sell it readily, Mr. Fitzgerald?"

"Yes ; I have written to a land speculator to meet me here to-morrow. I think I can drive a bargain with him. I shall make a good commission myself on the sale."

"I am glad of it," said Robert, politely.

They left the road, and went across the fields over the level, prairie-like land. In the distance was a deserted cabin, which appeared to be partially burned.

"Are you going to that cabin?" asked our hero.

"Yes," answered his employer. "That cabin is on Mr. Robinson's land."

"Did he build it?"

"No ; it was built by a squatter, who took advantage of the owner being a non-resident, and





ROBERT THROWN INTO THE DISCUSSED WELL.

made himself at home here, without leave or license. The cabin had not been erected long, however, before it caught fire and was partially burned."

"Does any one live there now?"

"No."

The two kept on their way till they reached the deserted cabin.

A rod or two distant was an open well, which seemed, as well as the cabin, to be disused.

"The squatter seems to have dug a well," said Robert.

"Yes; I wonder whether it is deep," said Fitzgerald.

Naturally Robert advanced till he stood on the brink of the well. An instant later and he was pushed violently forward and fell into the yawning pit.

"That disposes of him forever!" said Fitzgerald, and turning, he fled swiftly from the spot, leaving the victim of his treachery to his fate.

CHAPTER XXVII.

ROBERT FINDS HIMSELF IN A TIGHT PLACE.

THE action of Fitzgerald was so rapid and unexpected that Robert was unable to protect himself in any way. He fell, but mechanically, as he had seen trapeze performers do in the circus when falling, he held himself erect, with his hands at his sides, and dropped in that position into three feet of water at the bottom of the well. Fortunately for him the depth of the well was not great, about fifteen feet, and he sustained no injury to his limbs, the water, moreover, breaking the force of the descent.

Still, when unexpectedly he found himself at the bottom of the well, his situation was by no means pleasant.

"What could have induced Mr. Fitzgerald to push me in?" he asked himself in a bewildered way. "What possible object could he have in doing it?"

That his employer did push him he couldn't

doubt, for he felt the push, which was a forcible one. Yet it seemed so causeless, so utterly without an object, that he was tempted to doubt the testimony of his senses. To the reader, of course, it is perfectly clear, but we have sources of information that Robert had not.

He was not a boy to give up, though it certainly looked hopeless to attempt to get out. Had the well been at the East it would have been walled in on all sides by rocks, but stones of any size are not numerous in many parts of the West, and this had originally been boarded, but some of the boards had disappeared.

"It isn't very deep," thought Robert, "but how in the world am I to get out?"

He made several attempts, but they were all futile. Things began to look serious, for the house was deserted, and probably very few persons came that way.

While in a state of painful anxiety he heard, faintly, a boy whistle. The sound became more distinct as if the boy were approaching, and hope was kindled in our hero's breast.

"If I could only attract his attention," he thought.

He shouted as loud as he could, but the sound was partially lost before it reached the surface of the well. Still it attracted the attention of Fred Lathrop, the boy who was whistling, who stopped to listen.

"Where did that sound come from?" he thought.

It was repeated, and this time he could distinguish the word "Help!"

"By gracious, it comes from the well!" he said to himself. "Who can be down there?"

He drew near and looked down. It was darker near the bottom, but he could descry Robert, who was looking up.

"Who's there?" asked Fred.

"It's I—a boy. Help me up!"

"How did you get down there?"

"Help me out and I'll tell you."

"I don't see how I am to do it," said Fred, after a pause.

"Isn't there a rope round about there somewhere?"

"The old well-rope used to be coiled up in a corner of the house; I don't know whether it's there now."

"Look—will you?"

Fred needed no second request. He went to the house and was fortunate enough to find the rope. He brought it with him to the edge of the well.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed.

"Throw one end to me."

This was done.

"Now, do you think you can pull hard enough to draw me out? I will help myself with my feet."

"I am afraid I'm not strong enough."

"Suppose you try," said Robert, who didn't like to give up the hope of an immediate escape.

"Stop, there's my brother-in-law coming across the fields," said Fred, eagerly. "He will help me."

"Mr. Davis!" he cried, "come here and help me."

"What are you up to, Fred?" inquired the young man addressed. "Are you fishing in the well?"

"Yes; I am fishing—for a boy," responded Fred.

"Are you gone crazy?"

"No; come here and look for yourself."

Davis did so, and was sensible enough to understand, though very much surprised, that it would be best to postpone his inquiries till the boy was rescued.

"Give me hold of the rope!" he said. "Now, you boy down there, can you give a good, firm grip?"

"Try me and see."

"If you let it slip through your fingers you will fall back and hurt yourself."

"I won't let it slip. Keep firm hold yourself."

It was not altogether an easy task, and Robert was rubbed unpleasantly against the sides of the well; but at length victory crowned the efforts of the three, and our hero, his clothes looking none the better for his immersion in the water, and his contact with the sides of the well gave him a decided tramp-like appearance.

"Well, here you are!" said Mr. Davis. "How did you get into the well? Did you fall in?"

"I was pushed in," answered Robert.

"Pushed in!" repeated Fred and his brother-in-law in concert.

"Yes."

"Who pushed you in?"

"My employer—the man I was travelling with."

"What made him do it?"

"That is more than I can tell."

"Was he angry with you?"

"There had been no quarrel nor disagreement, and I supposed we were excellent friends."

"I wouldn't fancy such a friend," said Fred, dryly.

"The man must have had some motive," said Mr. Davis, who was a young lawyer.

"I can't think of any. I think he may have been insane," said Robert, to whom this had occurred as a possible solution of the problem.

"How long had you been with him?"

"Only about a week. He proposed to me to take a walk this morning, and brought me here."

"Your clothes look the worse for the fall," said Fred.

"Yes, I look like a tramp," answered Robert, glancing down at his wet and muddy clothes with disgust. "I've got another suit at the hotel, unless Mr. Fitzgerald has carried off my valise. I don't much like going back there in this trim."

"You needn't," said Fred. "Come home with me. You are about my size; I will lend you one

of my suits, while yours is being cleansed and dried."

"Thank you!" said Robert, relieved; "you are very kind. And what will your mother say when she sees you bringing such a looking tramp home with you?"

"Don't trouble yourself about that," said Fred. "Mother will understand it. She'll see that even if you do look like a tramp you're not a professional."

"That's just what I am," responded Robert, smiling. "I am a professional—circus rider."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Fred, with something of interest. "Are you a bareback rider?"

"Yes."

"We've got a horse in the barn. Won't you try riding on him?"

"Oh, the horse has to be trained as well as the rider: I can't perform on a horse that has never been in the ring."

"Then how did you happen to be with this man that served you such a trick?"

Robert explained.

Quarter of an hour's walk brought them to a substantial farm-house occupied by Fred's family.

He introduced Robert to his mother—a pleasant-faced lady, who received our hero cordially, especially after she had been informed of the manner in which he had been treated by his employer.

Fred took Robert up to his own bedroom, where he placed one of his own suits at his disposal. The soiled suit was taken down-stairs, where it was first dried by the fire and afterwards brushed clean till it once more assumed the respectable look which rightfully belonged to it.

Meanwhile Fred went round to the hotel to ascertain whether Fitzgerald had made his appearance.

He ascertained that he had returned and reported that the boy had gone on to the next town, where he was to join him. He paid the bill of both, took both valises and drove to the nearest railway station.

“He’s taken French leave!” said Fred. “He evidently never expects to see you again.”

“He may be disappointed in that,” said Robert, quietly; “I may appear to him when he least expects it. I intend to find out if I can what was his object in throwing me into the well.”

“That’s where I’m with you!” said Fred. “I

wouldn't let him go unpunished for such an outrage."

When Robert came to reflect upon his situation, however, he felt embarrassed. His bills, of course, had been paid by Fitzgerald, and he had not yet received any wages. The consequence was, that while he was nearly two thousand miles distant from his starting-point, he had but a dollar and a half in his pocket. He might, to be sure, write to Dr. Grey for a portion of his savings, but it would take some time for the remittance to arrive.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ROBERT SUBDUES A HORSE.

ROBERT somehow had an objection to sending to Dr. Grey for money, though the money was his own. It seemed like a confession of failure, and he did not care to write what sort of an accident had befallen him, since it would involve long explanations. Therefore, though he had but a dollar and a half left, he decided to set out on his way home; that is, towards the East, trusting to luck to get along. Though this was, perhaps rash, it was not so rash in Robert's case as it would have been in the case of an average boy, for he had been accustomed to earn his own living and possessed some talents and accomplishments which he could turn to account.

He took leave of his good friends, the Lathrops, without betraying to them his condition, or they would have insisted upon giving him substantial aid. As it was, Mrs. Lathrop insisted upon pre-

paring, with her own hands, a substantial lunch, which in due time Robert found very acceptable.

He set out on his journey on foot. His small capital would not allow him to travel in any other way. His clothes had been dried and pressed, and he presented a neat appearance, so that he was not likely to be taken for a tramp, though in his earlier days he had travelled in that character.

He walked in a leisurely way during the forenoon, and about noon sat down under a tree and ate his lunch. It was a plentiful one, but Robert, whose appetite had been sharpened by his walk, did full justice to it. In fact he ate it all.

"There's no particular hurry," he thought; "I may as well lie here for awhile and rest during the heat of the day."

It was not quite 2 o'clock when he was roused from a revery by hearing carriage wheels. He looked up and saw a lady in a four-wheel carriage, drawn by a horse who was inclined to be fractious. The lady driver was evidently anxious, for she pulled the reins frantically, and called out, "Whoa! you sir! Why don't you behave? Oh dear, what shall I do?"

The horse shook his head, pranced, backed,

and was evidently prepared to make trouble, much to the discomfort and alarm of the lady.

"Oh, dear! I wish I hadn't come alone!" she exclaimed. "I didn't think Prince would behave so. It's lucky if I don't get my neck broken!"

The horse was quite aware that he was master of the situation, and that his driver had lost her presence of mind, and, with a perversity which we sometimes see in horses, made up his mind to act as badly as possible.

So occupied was the lady that she did not see the boy, who sat under a tree by the roadside, nor suspected that in him she was to find a deliverer.

If there was any one accustomed to horses, and utterly without fear of them, it was Robert, as may be supposed from the nature of his training. He sprang to his feet when he perceived the situation, and, running forward, took off his hat, and asked politely, "Can I be of any service to you, madam?"

"Can you drive horses?" asked the lady, doubtfully.

Robert smiled.

"I'm used to them," he answered.

"Then won't you get in and drive for me? Prince is acting very badly to-day.

Robert did not wait for the carriage to stop, but with his usual activity clambered in, and was at the lady's side in an instant.

"Now," he said, "let me take the reins."

"If you are sure that you can drive," said Miss Stafford, doubtfully.

"You shall see for yourself," answered Robert, confidently.

He held the reins with a firm hand. The horse, though immediately sensible that there was a new hand at the helm, if I may speak figuratively, wasn't quite ready to yield.

Seeing that he was still fractious, Robert took the whip and brought it down smartly on the horse's flanks.

"Oh, what are you doing?" asked the lady in alarm. "Prince will run away with us!"

"Let him try it," said Robert, his eyes flashing. "If I can't subdue him, I'll sell out to some one than can!"

This was a boy's expression, but his confident manner served to reassure Miss Stafford, though Prince did really undertake to run. The road,

however, was good, there were no carriages to encounter, and Robert gave him his head, holding the reins, however, in a strong, firm grasp.

"I never rode so fast in my life!" said Miss Stafford nervously, as they flew over the road. "Don't let us tip over."

"No, ma'am, I won't."

After a while Prince slackened his speed. It was rather a warm day, and he found that it was not quite so good fun running as he found it when he felt that his driver was frightened—now the least sign of fractiousness was instantly followed by a smart stroke of the whip.

"I believe you do understand horses," said Miss Stafford at length.

"It's my business to understand them," answered Robert.

"You ain't a—jockey, are you?" asked the lady.

"No; I have been a circus-rider."

"You don't say so!" ejaculated the lady. "You can't jump through hoops and all them things, can you?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You are not with a circus now, are you?"

Robert explained that he had left circus life

for a time, but had been thrown out of employment unexpectedly.

"I am going to a birthday party of a little niece of mine," said Miss Stafford. "She is twelve years old to-day. There will be twenty or thirty boys and girls there. I wish you could do something to amuse them. It would make us all the more welcome."

"I am a little of a magician," said Robert. "If you think they would like to see some tricks—"

"The very thing!" exclaimed Miss Stafford, enthusiastically. "They are all fond of tricks. Where did you learn?"

When Miss Stafford was informed that Robert had learned of a real magician, that is of a professor of magic, she was very much pleased.

"I will engage you, then," she said, "for the afternoon and evening. When I say engage you, I mean I will pay you for your trouble."

"Oh, I won't charge anything," said Robert.

"But you must!" said the lady positively. "Louisa Stafford never allows any one to work for nothing. Besides you have perhaps prevented Prince here from breaking my neck. I certainly won't be mean enough to make you

work for nothing. I warrant you are not over-provided with money."

"Well, no," answered Robert, smiling. "I can't say I am. I have only a dollar and a half here, though I have some money in the hands of a friend at the East."

"And how far are you expecting to travel?"

"To New York."

"To New York—almost two thousand miles—on a dollar and a half! Goodness gracious, what a wild idea!"

"Oh, I expect to find something to do on the way, and if I don't I shall meet with good friends."

"A dollar and a half! I never heard of such a thing!" reiterated Miss Stafford,

Miss Louisa Stafford was a rich and kind-hearted maiden lady, who, unlike many of her class, was very fond of young people and a great favorite with them. No gathering of her nephews or nieces was considered complete without the presence of Aunt Louisa, who was sure in every way to promote the happiness of the young company. She was delighted to secure in Robert one who could so materially help her, and

inwardly resolved to reward him well for his services.

They drove up to a large house with a broad lawn, shaded by fine trees, under which were assembled a merry crowd of young people. When Miss Stafford's carriage was espied there was a rush to greet her.

"How are you all, children?" she said, heartily. "Oh; I see you are looking at this young gentleman with me. Well, he has saved my life."

"Saved your life!" exclaimed the children in chorus.

"Yes, Prince undertook to run away with and upset me, but Master Robert, here (she had inquired his name), subdued him, and here I am. I have taken the liberty to invite Professor Rudd to join our party."

"Professor Rudd!" repeated the children, bewildered.

"Yes; this young gentleman is a professor of magic, and he will perform some tricks this evening. This afternoon I expect you to be polite to him, and invite him to join your games."

This all were very ready to do, for Robert was

good-looking and gentlemanly in appearance, and soon made himself a general favorite.

Supper was served between five and six o'clock, and early in the evening Robert appeared as a magician. He had quite a variety of tricks and illustrations, and this part of the programme gave great satisfaction.

The next morning (for Miss Stafford and Robert also passed the night in the hospitable mansion) when our young hero was ready to start out on his journey, Miss Stafford, put in his hand a sealed envelope.

"Don't open this," she said, "till you have gone at least a mile."

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN UNPLEASANT ACQUAINTANCE.

ROBERT felt curious to learn what was in the letter, but faithfully carried out the wishes of Miss Stafford, and did not open it till he was more than a mile away.

On opening it, to his surprise he found inclosed two \$10 bills, with the following words written in pencil :

“MY YOUNG FRIEND ROBERT: I desire you to accept the inclosed and hope you will find it of use. You needn't hesitate, for it comes from a crusty old maid who has more than her share of this world's goods, and likes to do a little good as she goes along in life, instead of saving up thousands for heirs who might squander it. Accept my good wishes and thanks beside for the service you have done me in taming a perverse brute, and when you are again in this vicinity be sure to call on your friend,

“LOUISA STAFFORD.”

“The old lady’s a trump!” exclaimed Robert warmly. “There isn’t one in a thousand that would be so generous. This is a regular wind-fall to me as I am situated now. Now I shan’t be obliged to send to Dr. Grey for part of my savings.”

Robert continued on his way with a light heart, for it is wonderfully cheering to think that one has money enough to pay for rest and food at the close of the day. Our young hero decided that he would not walk all the way to the East, but would on the day following take the cars at any convenient station.

Pursuing his journey, he came to a portion of the road which ran through the primeval forests. He felt it to be rather a relief, for the morning was well advanced, and the sun began to make him uncomfortably warm. He soon had occasion to learn that to be warm is not the most undesirable thing that can happen to a traveller.

Half a mile from the entrance of the wood he saw sitting on the fallen trunk of a tree a rough-looking fellow, whose face looked even more repulsive than usual from a short black beard which appeared to be of a week’s growth. He looked

like what he was—a tramp, who was so from choice, even more than from necessity.

“What an ill-looking fellow!” thought Robert.

The man looked up, and scanned the boy curiously.

“Hallo, young chap!” he said.

“Hallo!” returned Robert.

“Have you got any tobacco about you?” inquired the tramp.

“No, I never use it.”

“Then have you a cigar? That will do just as well.”

“No; I don’t smoke at all.”

“Oh, you are an innocent baby!” said the man, with a sneer of disappointment.

Robert did not think it necessary to reply, but was moving on, being anxious to get away from so undesirable a companion as soon as possible.

“Stop a minute, boy—don’t be in such a hurry,” said the man.

“If you have anything to say to me I will listen,” said Robert, coldly.

“You will, will you? You’re mighty accommodatin’! Where are you goin’?”

“Straight ahead!”



"Any fool would know that. That isn't an answer."

"Why do you wish to know?" retorted Robert.

"That's my business!" said the tramp, his repulsive features assuming an ugly expression. "You'd better answer my question."

Robert thought on the whole it would be prudent to avoid trouble by keeping on as good terms as possible with the man.

"I can't tell you," he said, "for I don't know myself. I expect to keep on till I get to New York."

"That's where I'm goin'! Suppose we keep company," said the man with a grin.

"We can keep company for the present, if you wish," answered Robert, trying to repress his disgust.

"Look here, young fellow! Have you got any money?" asked the tramp with a sidelong glance.

Robert was not surprised at this inquiry, for he had expected it, but in spite of his courage it alarmed him, for he could see that he was no match in physical strength for this ill-looking man.

"A little!" he answered.

"How much?"

"That's my business," answered Robert, provoked. "I don't ask how much money you've got."

"I haven't a cent," said the tramp, "but," he added, significantly, "I'm going to have some soon."

The look which accompanied this declaration made it evident what he meant, and Robert looked about to see what chance he had of escape if the worst came to the worst. As to surrendering the \$20 for which he had been indebted to the generosity of Miss Stratton, he had no intention of doing it, unless it should be absolutely necessary.

"I have nothing to do with your affairs," said Robert. "If you'll let me know which way you are going, I'll go the other way."

"Will you so? No, boy, you don't get rid of me so easily. We're goin' the same way. If you want to leave you can, but you must hand over your money first."

"Are you a thief, then?" demanded Robert, quickly.

"No; and you'd better not call me so. I'm only goin' to borrow your money; I'll give you my note for it," returned the tramp with a cunning grin.

"I decline to lend," said Robert stoutly.

"Look here, my young chicken!" said the man in a menacing tone. Ain't you crowin' rather too loud for a bantem? Do you know who I am?"

"No, but I can guess."

"Guess, then?"

"You're a man whose company I do not like."

The tramp laughed. Instead of offending, the reply appeared to amuse him.

"That's true enough, I reckon. Well, I'm a man that don't stand no nonsense. I want your money."

He advanced towards Robert in a menacing manner, and our hero, who had been looking about him, jumped aside nimbly, and seizing the branch of a tree swung himself up into the branches, before his companion clearly understood his intention.

"Oh, that's your game, is it?" he said, angrily.

"It won't do!"

He darted forward, but Robert had been too quick for him, and was already out of reach. He was light and agile by nature, and his training in the ring had helped to make him more so.

“So you think you’ve escaped me, do you?” he demanded with an oath.

Robert did not answer, but looked calmly down upon him from the tree.

“Come down at once!”

“Thank you; I’d rather stay here,” said our hero calmly.

Without a word the tramp made an effort to follow Robert up the tree.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE TREE OF REFUGE.

THE tramp was stout and clumsily made, and although he was strongly made he was not agile. Moreover, the branch by which Robert had helped himself upward was over six feet from the ground, and had only been reached by a leap. The trunk of the tree was large in circumference, and afforded no facilities for climbing. The efforts of the pursuer, therefore, were vain.

“Come down!” he shouted, peremptorily.

“I have already said that I am very comfortable here,” answered Robert.

“Do you mean to defy me?”

“I don’t wish to have anything to do with you.”

“I wish I had a pistol!” muttered the tramp.
“I’d soon have you down then.”

Robert was devoutly thankful that he was not provided with such a weapon. He felt relieved

by the discovery, for it had occurred to him as possible, and in that event he would have had to make a virtue of necessity and come down.

"Why didn't I lay hold of the boy when I had him beside me?" thought the disappointed tramp. "Who would have thought he could have sprung up like that?"

He determined to try once more what he could accomplish by threats.

"Look here, boy, if you know what's best for yourself, you'll come down!" he cried, furiously.

"I think it's best for me to remain up here," said Robert.

"When you come down I'll wring your neck, you little rascal!"

"That isn't much inducement for me to come down," said Robert, coolly.

"If you come down within five minutes and hand over your money, I'll let you go without doing you any harm."

"That's very kind of you, but I need it myself."

Robert's coolness incensed the tramp, who would have felt more satisfaction if his intended victim had exhibited terror.

Robert was reminded of the scene in the woods at Crampton, where Mr. Tarbox had besieged Charlie Davis and himself, and the trick by which they had then escaped. This would not work now, and indeed it didn't seem clear how he was to escape at all. There was nothing but to remain up in the tree, and try to tire out the patience of the thievish tramp.

Twenty minutes passed. They passed slowly for Robert, but they also passed slowly for his besieger, who was in a hurry to get possession of the boy's money, and feared some one might come along to whom he could appeal for help. If he had known that Robert had twenty dollars in his pocket his eagerness would have increased.

"Are you coming down?" he demanded, looking up in the tree fiercely.

"When you are gone away," answered the boy, composedly.

"If you wait much longer I'll murder you when you do come down. You may think I won't do it, but I'm savage enough to do anything."

"I don't doubt it at all," said our hero.

"I might tell you of how I've served other persons who trifled with me."

"Do!" replied Robert. "It'll take up the time."

"No," answered the tramp, suspiciously. "I don't care to have you inform against me, but I want you to remember that I am a desperate man."

"I'll take it for granted. I don't want to fall into the hands of such a man."

The tramp hunted about for a stone to throw at the boy, but in that part of the West stones are not as plenty as in New England, and his kind intentions were frustrated.

"Perhaps you think I'll go away after a while," he said presently, "but that's where you make a mistake. I will stay here all night, if necessary."

He looked as if he would really carry out his threat, and Robert, it must be admitted, in spite of his coolness of demeanor, began to feel anxious.

"What an obstinate ruffian!" he thought. "If he keeps his word, it will be decidedly uncomfortable for me."

"Will no one come along?"

That was the thought that kept recurring to him. It seemed to offer the only means of escape.

At last he heard wheels, and was thankful. So did the tramp, and felt uneasy. But when the carriage came along it turned out to contain a woman and young boy. It would do no good to hail them, for they could not help him, and the tramp might be led to attack and rob them. So Robert was constrained to let the carriage pass, and to find himself once more in solitude with the tramp.

"You did well not to speak," said the latter, grimly. "If you had I would have robbed her, too."

"Just what I thought," returned Robert. "That seems to be your business."

"Don't be impudent, boy!"

"Isn't it the truth?"

"Come down and you'll find out."

"I know well enough already."

Another half hour passed, and no one came by. At last the two heard a sound and a man whistling; the same seemed approaching.

"I hope it's a strong, able-bodied man," thought Robert.

When at length the man came in sight, a great tide of joy swept over him. It was the very man

whose presence he would have desired above all others. It was Hercules, who had at one time been employed in the same circus with himself, to perform feats of strength.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HERCULES—THE STRONG MAN.

“**H**ERCULES!” cried Robert, joyfully, from his perch in the tree.

Hercules paused and looked about in surprise, for he saw no one except an ill-looking tramp, who, he was sure, had not spoken to him. He thought he recognized the voice, but was not certain.

“Who is it calls me?” he asked. “Where are you?”

“Here, in this tree.”

Then Hercules espied our hero and recognized him.

“Robert Rudd,” he cried, in mingled surprise and joy.

“Yes, it is I.”

“What are you doing here? I had no idea of seeing you here.”

“Nor I you; but I am glad you came along.”

“Why are you up there?”

“Because the gentleman below insists upon my giving him my money, and I have a use for it myself.”

“Ha!” said Hercules, eying the besieging force narrowly. “Well, he looks like a thief and a scoundrel.”

Meantime, as may readily be imagined, the tramp had been busily scanning him. Now the appearance of Hercules was very deceptive. He was not a man of large, powerful frame—indeed he did not look as strong as the tramp; but his sinews were of iron and his muscles were immense, but these were concealed by his clothing. Only in the ring, when he performed his feats of strength, were they displayed to advantage. The tramp was not a classical scholar, or the name Hercules might have told him something. As it were he really thought himself the more powerful man of the two, and it came into his mind that he might as well enlarge his schemes of plunder and force this new acquaintance to pay tribute as well as the boy whom he was besieging.

“You call me a thief and a scoundrel, do you?” he said, flaming up in fierce wrath.

"Yes, I do," returned Hercules, eying him coolly.

"How dare you do it?"

"Why shouldn't I?" said Hercules, contemptuously. "Didn't you mean to rob this boy if I hadn't come along?"

"I will do it yet, but I have business with you first."

"What kind of business?"

"Empty your pockets, and don't be long about it," said the tramp, approaching Hercules menacingly.

It had never occurred to Robert that the tramp would attempt anything so absurd as to attack the professional champion, whose name was famous for strength, and when he saw that such was his intention he laughed aloud in amazement.

"Don't crow, young rooster!" cried the tramp, angrily. "I'll tackle your friend first; your turn will come by and by."

"Oh, you want to have a tussle with me, do you?" said Hercules, eying the other with a smile of amusement.

"Yes, I'll finish you up in short order," said the tramp, boastfully.

"Don't be afraid, Hercules!" cried Robert, with a laugh.

"I'll try not to. So you want me to hand over my money, do you?" he said.

"Yes; and you'd better be quick about it, too," growled the tramp.

"Suppose I don't?"

"Then I'll whip you till you can't stand."

"This is better than any circus I ever attended," said Robert, delighted.

"He'll think it's a circus before he gets through," said Hercules, significantly. "Well, my ill-looking friend, I must inform you in the outset that you are taking a good deal of trouble for a very little. My stock of money is very low."

"I don't care; you can hand over what you've got."

"Or fight for it?"

"Yes," growled the tramp.

"I think I'll fight—a little friendly encounter. It's the custom to shake hands first; will you do it?"

The tramp extended his hand, which Hercules at once grasped with such an iron pressure that

the tramp fairly danced and howled with pain, while the veins swelled upon his forehead.

"Let go!" he yelled.

Hercules released his hand with a laugh.

"It's only a small lesson, my friend. Do you want my money now?"

"Who are you?" asked the tramp, with the addition of an oath.

"I am Hercules, the strong man. You made a mistake when you tackled me."

"I'm off, then," said the tramp.

"Not quite yet. You need a further lesson."

So saying, Hercules seized the tramp suddenly, raised him aloft, threw him up in the air, and then hurled him to the distance of a couple of rods, where he lay stunned for a minute or two.

"Now clear out!" said Hercules sternly, as the rascal rose to his feet and limped off. "I would give you in charge if it were not too much trouble. Never let me set eyes on you again!"

"I won't if I can help it," muttered the tramp as he slunk away.

"Now, Robert, come down from the tree, and tell me all about yourself."

Robert told his story, and asked Hercules for similar information.

"I've been to see a sister who lives near here," he said, "and now am on my way back to North's circus, where I am engaged."

"Where are they?"

"At Athens."

"How far off is that?"

"Only ten miles."

"Is there anything for me?" asked Robert, eagerly. "I want to work my way back to the East."

"They've got a rider—but I forgot, your doctor won't let you ride. If you don't mind selling at the lemonade stand, there'll be a chance. They've sent off the boy that worked for them the first of the season. Young Ajax is with the circus, and others whom you know."

"I'll go."

The same night the two friends joined North's circus, and set out on a leisurely return to the East.

CHAPTER XXXII.

FITZGERALD'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

WE must now go back to Chestnutwood, where the old man, Cornelius Richmond, though blessed with a large share of the gifts of fortune, was passing his declining years in loneliness, with no one of his kindred near him except his nephew, Hugo. For years Hugo had been his constant companion; in manner, at least, he had been devoted to his uncle, yet the old man had never been drawn to him. Sometimes he reproached himself because he could not feel more warmly towards his nephew.

"Hugo seems devoted to me," he said to himself. "Why is it that I cannot thoroughly like him? It must be because my heart is in the grave of my son Julian. Ah, if only his son were living, that I might have my grandson with me. That boy whom I saw riding in the circus—I

could get to love him for his resemblance to my son; but Hugo tells me he has lost all traces of him."

The simple old man little suspected that his crafty nephew had taken effectual means to prevent his ever seeing any more of this boy, towards whom he felt a yearning affection, for which we can account, though he could not. Indeed, he was not a man to suspect guile of any one, being in himself so guileless, and he really thought that Hugo's attentions were dictated by genuine affection, instead of selfish scheming for his uncle's wealth.

"You have heard nothing more about the boy, Hugo?" he asked one morning.

"No, uncle," answered Hugo, suppressing an expression of impatience.

"It is strange."

"I am afraid you would be disappointed in him, even if we could find him, and bring him here, Uncle Cornelius."

"No, I should not be disappointed, for I should not expect too much. It would be a pleasure to look upon the boy's face, and think my lost Julian was again before me."

"The old fool!" muttered Hugo under his breath. "Will he never quit harping on that boy?"

"You must remember that he has been brought up in a circus, amid very objectionable associations, uncle," he said aloud. "What can be expected under such circumstances?"

"What is his name?"

"His circus name is Robert Rudd."

The old man repeated it softly to himself.

The same day he sent for a lawyer, and professed his intention to modify his will.

Hugo was alarmed.

"Can he be going to leave anything to that boy?" he asked himself.

He would have liked to have asked his uncle, but only contrived to hint a question, to which the old man replied evasively. In reality, he had appended a codicil to his will, bequeathing the sum of ten thousand dollars "to the young circus rider, generally known as Robert Rudd," and did not like to mention it to Hugo lest the latter should remonstrate with him, and the old man felt too weak to argue.

"There will be enough left for Hugo," he said

to himself. "Ten thousand dollars is but a small part of my property."

"It is very lucky," thought Hugo, "that I made arrangements with Fitzgerald to dispose of the boy, in case my uncle has done anything foolish in his will. It will save litigation and trouble."

He looked at the old man—frail, feeble, apparently on the verge of the grave—and reflected with impatience that as he looked now he had looked for five years past. His hold on life was tenacious.

"Good heavens! He may live for five or ten years yet!" thought Hugo. "He looks as if a breath would blow him away; yet he encumbers the earth year after year, holding one in a detestable slavery to his whims and caprices. I shall be an old man myself, or almost one, before Chestnutwood falls into my possession; but when it does"—and his eye flashed with hopeful anticipation, and he walked with a prouder gait—"when it does I will live!"

One day Hugo was just getting ready for a solitary walk when the servant announced, "A gentleman to see you, sir."

"A gentleman? What name?" asked Hugo.

"He said his name was Fitzgerald, sir."

"Fitzgerald?" exclaimed Hugo, his voice betraying the excitement he felt. "Tell him I will be with him at once."

He entered the drawing-room, and Fitzgerald arose from a sofa on which he had seated himself.

"Ah! Fitzgerald!" said Hugo, with assumed indifference.

"Yes, it is I. I have—"

"Hush! I am about to take a walk about the place. You can join me, and whatever you have to say, you can say more freely as we walk."

"Very well, sir; it is immaterial to me."

Hugo took his hat, and the two sauntered along the broad walk till they reached a point at some distance from the mansion.

"Mr. Fitzgerald, what have you got to tell me?" asked Hugo eagerly.

"The boy won't trouble you any more," answered Fitzgerald, sententiously.

"You mean—the circus rider?"

"Certainly; your young cousin."

"Hush!" said Hugo, angrily. "How dare you call him my cousin?"

"Because he was your cousin," said the other firmly. "He stood between you and the property, and that is why you wanted me to put him out of the way."

"I won't discuss that matter just now—I will simply ask you if you mean to assure me that the boy is dead?"

"Yes."

"You can swear it?"

"Of course. He is at the bottom of a well in a distant Western State, unless he has been fished out."

"He must have been very careless to fall in, whoever he was," said Hugo.

"Very much so!" said Fitzgerald mockingly.

"Well," said Hugo, philosophically, "he'd probably have met with a violent death anyway. This bareback riding is dangerous."

"So it is; I saw him thrown from his horse in the ring at Crampton."

"Indeed! Was he hurt?"

"Sprained his ankle—that was all. He had to retire from the ring for the season. Then I offered him an engagement to travel with me to the West."

"Indeed! Very kind of you!" said Hugo, indifferently. "Well, shall we go back to the house?"

"Go back to the house!" repeated Fitzgerald, surprised. "Why, we haven't transacted our business."

"Our business! Why, what business have I with you?"

"I want pay for my work," answered Fitzgerald sharply.

"Your work! Really, I don't remember to have employed you," said Hugo with languid indifference.

"Can he mean to go back on his promise?" Fitzgerald asked himself uncomfortably.

"You promised me \$2000 down when I had done this job, and \$3000 more when you came into your inheritance," he said quickly.

Hugo, who was a man of consummate meanness, could not bear to part with so large a sum of money. Now that he had obtained all that he desired, and believed that his young cousin, the only possible obstacle between him and his uncle's wealth, was out of the way, he thought he might safely repudiate the bargain, and send

off Fitzgerald penniless, or at any rate with a trifle.

"You seem to be dreaming, or romancing," he said coldly.

"Do you mean to say you did not promise me the money?" he demanded passionately.

"I never did; of course not. I have never had any dealings with you."

Fitzgerald clenched his hand together until the nails entered the flesh. Had he committed a detestable crime for nothing?

"Look here, Mr. Hugo Richmond," he said, passionately. "This won't do! You are not going to use me and then throw me off. Pay me this money, or I will report you."

"You had better reflect before you try it," said Hugo, composedly. "I shall accuse you of blackmail, and your charge would never be believed."

"Wouldn't it? You may find yourself bitterly mistaken."

"You must remember that in charging yourself with murder you will run the risk of the hangman's rope. Even if the charge could do me any harm you would probably lose your own life."

This was no doubt true, and Fitzgerald stared

at the man who had tempted him to a crime and now threatened him with the consequences while he held back the reward, with stupefaction.

"You see your plan won't work," said Hugo, smoothly.

"I believe you are a fiend incarnate!" exclaimed Fitzgerald, feeling baffled and defeated.

"Really, I don't much care what you think of me."

"Do you mean to send me away penniless?" asked Fitzgerald, hoarsely.

"No, I will take pity on your necessities and give you fifty dollars. I don't recognize any claims you may pretend to have on me, but I will help you so far."

"Give me the fifty dollars, then!" said Fitzgerald, sullenly.

Hugo drew from his wallet five ten-dollar bills, and handed them to his companion.

"Now," said he, "I must wish you good morning. Don't come in my way again!"

As Hugo walked back to the house Fitzgerald looked after him.

"This will prove a bad morning's work for you, Mr. Hugo Richmond!" he muttered.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FITZGERALD SEES AN APPARITION.

A MONTH later North's circus had come as far on its Eastern trip as Syracuse. Robert Rudd was still with it, and again was employed in his old business of riding. The young rider regularly employed was sick, and feeling that his ankle had become strong enough, Robert had volunteered to take his place.

It so happened that Fitzgerald found himself in Syracuse at this time. Fortune had smiled upon him. He had carried the fifty dollars he received from Hugo Richmond to the gaming-table, and contrary to the usual fortune in such cases had won steadily till he had a fund of ten times the amount. Ordinarily he would have kept on, but now he had a definite object in view, and this was to revenge himself upon his faithless employer.

"Why was I such a fool as to harm the boy?"

he had asked himself more than once. "The cunning villain schemed to get me into his power, and he has done so. I do not dare to expose him, because in so doing I should risk my own life. Why did I not send him out of the country merely, and then claim the reward?"

But the past could not be recalled, and though Fitzgerald heartily wished the boy alive, he always thought of him as lying dead at the bottom of a well in a far Western State. His busy brain was trying to contrive some plan of revenge, when he chanced to see a poster of North's circus. Robert's name was not on the bill, as he was only a substitute, not the regular rider.

The performance had commenced when Fitzgerald entered.

He looked on with languid indifference till the time came for Robert to enter the ring.

When Fitzgerald saw the boy, whom he supposed to be dead, riding in the ring, he was as much startled as if he had seen some one arise from the dead. Could he be deceived? No. There could be no such close resemblances between two boys as between the rider and Robert Rudd.

"Yes, it is he!" decided Fitzgerald, and his heart was filled with gladness. As we know, the gladness had a selfish source, but he was certainly overjoyed to think that the boy was alive and well.

Robert went through his usual act with his usual grace, and never suspected that his would-be murderer was looking on.

When the performance was over, Fitzgerald lingered near the tents till he saw Robert come out. It was rather embarrassing to disclose himself to the boy, who had so nearly fallen a victim to his violence, but it must be done.

"Robert! Robert Rudd!" he said, touching the boy on the arm.

Robert turned, and his face became stern when he saw at his side the man who had tried to murder him.

"You villain!" he said. "How have you the face to show yourself to me?"

"Because," answered Fitzgerald, "I am prepared to make atonement for the injury I did you. No one can be more delighted to see you than I."

"How can I trust you after what has passed?" asked Robert, suspiciously.

"Don't trust me till I show myself worthy of trust. I am prepared to do more for you than any man living."

"What do you mean?"

"Suppose that I tell you who you are, that I restore you to your relatives, that I secure for you the inheritance of a large estate, would you consider that I am making atonement for my offence?"

"Can you do this?" asked Robert, eagerly.

"I can," answered Fitzgerald.

"What are your terms, for I suppose that you do not work for nothing?"

"I stipulate nothing. When I have succeeded and you come to your own I will trust to your generosity. If that seems strange to you, I don't mind telling you that I have a selfish motive. I wish to revenge myself upon the man who occupies your place, and whom you will disinherit."

"Will you give me fuller information?" asked Robert. "Will you let me know who I am and how I came to lose my home?"

"Yes; I am prepared to tell you all. Come to the hotel where I am staying, and after you have heard me we will concert together plans for reinstating you."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MYSTERY OF ROBERT RUDD IS SOLVED.

HUGO RICHMOND was in good spirits. All seemed working in his favor. He had got rid of Robert, the rightful heir, and escaped paying Fitzgerald the money he had agreed to pay him. Now his uncle, whose feeble hold on life had so long kept him from the coveted inheritance, seemed getting weaker and weaker every day. He was not positively sick, but he was sad and despondent; his appetite had failed, and he was more thin and shadowy than ever.

The wicked nephew could hardly conceal his exultation as he looked on the feeble old man, and calculated how few weeks he probably had to live.

"Yes," he said to himself, "Chestnutwood will soon be mine. And then—then I will take care to be repaid for the slavery of the last eight years."

Old Mr. Richmond could not read the nephew's heart, nor did he suspect his baseness. He thought him sincerely devoted to his interests.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," announced the servant, interrupting one of Hugo's day dreams.

"Who is it?"

"I don't know, sir; but I think he has been here before."

When Hugo entered the drawing-room and saw Fitzgerald, he stopped short with a frown.

"You here?" he said.

"Yes, I am here," answered the other proudly.

"You might as well have stayed away. If you think you can levy any black-mail you are mistaken."

"I expect nothing of the kind."

"Probably you don't want any money?" said Hugo, sneering.

"Not from you," answered Fitzgerald, eying him steadily.

"You don't want money?" exclaimed Hugo, in genuine surprise.

"No, though I have no doubt you would be very glad to give me a large sum."

"You are quite mistaken. I suspect you are drunk."

"That is where you are mistaken."

"What is your object in coming, then? Is this a friendly call?" asked Hugo, with an evident sneer.

"Well, perhaps it may be so considered; I came to give you a friendly warning."

"A warning?"

"Yes."

"I really can't conceive how I can need any warning from you. What is your warning?"

"I warn you to leave the country as soon as it is in your power."

Hugo laughed scornfully.

"Thank you for nothing," he said; "why should I leave the country?"

"Because you will otherwise be charged with instigating the murder of your cousin, known as Robert Rudd."

"Humph! No one will credit it. Besides, you will have to admit that you killed him."

"You are mistaken again. He is not dead."

"Not dead?" echoed Hugo, turning pale and sinking into a seat.

"No, he is as much alive as you or I, but I am prepared to swear that you hired me to kill him."

"Villain! you deceived me!" exclaimed Hugo, furiously.

"I feel less a villain than if I had compassed the boy's death."

Hugo reflected a moment. A gulf seemed to open before him, and just as his uncle was nearing death all his schemes seemed in danger of failure. This must be prevented at all hazards.

"Fitzgerald!" he said, in an altered tone, "this thing can yet be arranged. You have gained an advantage over me, I grant, and I am prepared to make it worth your while to keep this thing hushed up. What are your terms?"

"Why should I name terms when you have once treacherously gone back on your word?"

"I will not do so again."

"Do you want me to kill the boy?"

"No! Let him live, but never let him suspect who he is."

"And for this you will give me—how much?"

"Five thousand dollars!" answered Hugo, after a brief pause.

"It is a good sum, but your uncle's property amounts to a quarter of a million, at least."

"Nothing like it," answered Hugo, hurriedly. "Besides, he is likely to leave a large part to charitable institutions."

"Not if you can prevent it," thought Fitzgerald.

"It is useless!" he said aloud. "I am not to be bought."

"What, then, do you require?" asked Hugo, desperately.

"I require you to leave the country, and acknowledge Robert Rudd as your cousin."

"Never!" said Hugo, fiercely.

"Very well!" said Fitzgerald, rising.

"What are you going to do?" asked Hugo, anxiously.

"To leave you to your fate! Within a few hours you will be arrested on a charge of complicity in an attempted murder."

"Stay!" exclaimed Hugo, now thoroughly alarmed. "How far has this gone? Surely you have not revealed anything to Robert Rudd?"

"Everything," answered Fitzgerald, laconically.

"To any one else?"

"Yes, to a lawyer, who is possessed of all the evidence in the case, and is prepared to communicate all to your uncle!"

"Is this true?" asked Hugo, pale with dismay.

"You can believe it or not. I have only this to say, that you had better go with me to the hotel where your cousin and his lawyer are now staying, and assure yourself whether we are in earnest."

"Suppose I grant your demands and acknowledge the boy?"

"Then you will be suffered to go where you please unharmed."

"I will go with you."

Hugo accompanied Fitzgerald to the hotel, had a private interview with the lawyer, and decided that opposition was useless. He took care, however, to feather his own nest by appropriating a large amount of government bonds belonging to his uncle, which, in addition to his pickings and stealings for eight years past, provided him with a competency. The theft could not be proved, for he alone had the charge of his uncle's affairs. With his ill-gotten gains he sailed for Europe, where he is now residing.

The joy of Cornelius Richmond when his grandson was restored to him can be imagined. It seemed to bring him back from the grave and restore his strength. A tutor was at once engaged to remedy Robert Rudd's—now Robert Richmond's—defective education, and money was actually lavished upon him by his doting grandfather. But Robert stood the test of prosperity as he had stood the test of adversity. He remained the same frank, manly, self-respecting boy, and was not drawn into squandering his money in policy or dissipation. But he delighted to help those of his former associates who were unfortunate and needed assistance—for instance, a trapeze performer, who having fractured a leg by a fall from the trapeze, was left in want with a wife and four young children dependent upon his exertions. For months Robert allowed him \$10 a week, and was heartily glad that his grandfather's liberality allowed him also to be liberal.

Our hero rejoiced the heart of his old friend Anak by the gift of a handsome gold watch, and he also remembered others who had been kind to him. He has sent an invitation to Sidney Grey

to visit him at Chestnutwood, and has requested Squire Grey to transfer the \$200 entrusted to him to his son. He had intended to offer a home to Charlie Davis, his associate rider, but Charlie had already attracted the attention of a gentleman, who had offered to adopt him at the close of the present season. My readers may be interested to know that Master Charlie is this very summer travelling with a circus through the New England States and Canada. Having lamed his foot, he, too, is engaged for the time being in selling prize packages and candy, but will probably retire from professional life in October. Hundreds of the boys who read this story will probably see him at some time during the season.

Robert is busily employed in remedying the deficiencies in his education, and is already entrusted with a large part of the business connected with the management of his grandfather's property. From the latter has been concealed Hugo's wicked attempt to make away with Robert, as it would shock the old man and affect him injuriously. But he seldom inquires for his nephew, to whom he was never much attached. He is quite content with the company of his grandson.

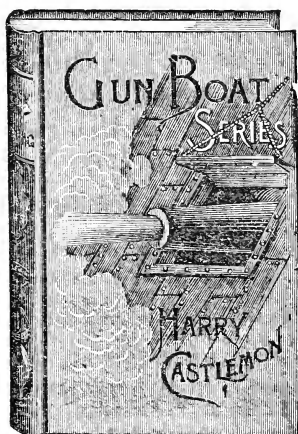
There are few who know that Robert Richmond,
the heir of Chestnutwood, was once

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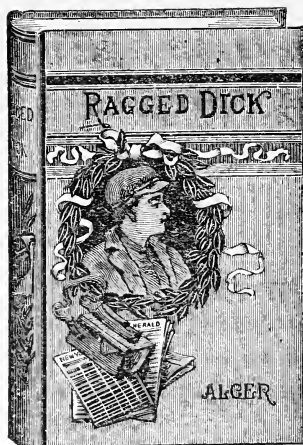
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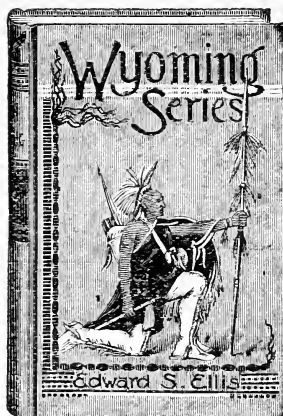
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